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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Bangladesh to vote in 1st election since Hasina's ouster

DHAKA, 11 FEB

Bangladeshis will cast ballots on Thursday in the country's first election since the mass uprising ended the 15-year rule of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The closely watched election, overseen by an interim administration led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, will seek to restore democratic norms after Hasina's tenure saw a shrinking political space and disputed polls.

With Hasina living in exile in India and her Awami League party banned, the two front-runners are alliances led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami. Opinion polls have put BNP Chief Tarique Rahman ahead of Jamaat's Ameer Shafiqur Rahman. However, Jamaat has tied up with the student-led National Citizen Party, an offshoot of the student bodies that toppled Hasina. That may swing young voters.

The election of a new Parliament will involve more than 127 million eligible voters in the nation of some 170 million people, with 1,981 candidates contesting parliamentary seats. The Yunus-led administration has stated that it is committed to holding elections that are free, fair and peaceful. To help ensure this, around 500 foreign observers will be present, including from the European Union and the Commonwealth.

Notably, Bangladeshi citizens living abroad will be able to participate through a postal voting system for the first time.

During his nearly 18-month tenure, Yunus said he attempted to reset Bangladesh's democracy after Hasina's clampdown on rights and freedom. However, his tenure has been marred by a violent protests and a targeting of minorities in the Muslim majority nation. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5, 6

Brazil Prez to visit India on 19 Feb for trade deal

SAO PAULO, 11 FEB

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will visit India from 19 to 21 February, leading one of the largest overseas delegations of his administration to boost trade, investment and strategic cooperation. The trip is part of Brazil's effort to reduce reliance on the United States and China while strengthening ties with emerging economies such as India. Nearly 150 business leaders will accompany the delegation, signalling strong corporate interest. Bilateral trade has grown sharply, with Brazil exporting USD 6.9 billion worth of goods to India in 2025, while imports reached USD 8.4 billion. Talks are expected to cover defence cooperation, expansion of the Mercosur-India trade pact and agricultural collaboration.—*ANI*

Centre reading too much into Sonam's speeches, says SC

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned the Centre's decision to detain Ladakh activist Sonam Wangchuk under the National Security Act (NSA), observing that the government appeared to be reading "too much" into his remarks. Hearing a plea by his wife, Gitanjali J Angmo, a Bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and PB Varale noted that Wangchuk had expressed concern over the abandonment of Gandhian non-violence, rather than inciting unrest. The Centre argued that his speeches instigated youth and contributed to violence in Leh last year that left four dead and over 160 injured. The Court sought detention records and video links, and the matter will continue on Thursday. —*Agencies*

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PM sold 'Bharat Mata' to US over Adani, Epstein: RaGa

He claims US had the PM in its chokehold

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Congress leader and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused the Modi government of "selling Bharat Mata" and India's sovereignty to protect industrialists like Gautam Adani, while linking the BJP to the Epstein files.

Speaking in the Lok Sabha, Gandhi alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was under "direct pressure and in chokehold" from the US to sign the Indo-US interim trade deal at the expense of India's interests. He pointed out that cases have been filed against Adani in the US, and claimed that industrialist Anil Ambani and Union Minister Hardeep Puri's names appear in the Epstein files, adding that Puri knew who introduced Ambani to Epstein.

Parliamentary chair Jagdambika Pal reminded Gandhi to avoid naming individuals without verification and focus on the Budget debate. Gandhi further alleged that the government delayed responding to Adani-related summons in the US for 18 months, conceding to the trade deal to protect the industrialist.

LoP Rahul Gandhi speaks Lok Sabha on Wednesday —*PTI*

He warned that India's "most valuable 21st-century asset"—the data of its 1.4 billion people—was compromised under the deal. According to Gandhi, the agreement gives up control over digital trade rules, allows free flow of data to the US, removes data localisation requirements, limits digital taxation, permits tax holidays for large tech firms, and does not mandate disclosure of source codes.

Gandhi claimed the deal also undermines India's energy security, giving the US a say in its oil purchases and threatening tariffs if India defies them. He added that foreign tech firms already hold a near monopoly on Indian data, and this agreement would make it harder to store data locally, ensure transparency in algorithms, or tax profits generated from Indian data. Gandhi argued that if an "INDIA bloc" government had negotiated the deal, it would have insisted on India being treated as an equal, protecting its data, energy security, and farmers, while avoiding subordination to US interests. He criticised the trade deal's tariff structure, noting that India's average tariff has risen from 3% to 18%, while US imports into India are projected to jump from $46 billion to $146 billion annually. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

Met Epstein 3 times via delegation: Puri refutes Rahul's claim

Rijiju wants Rahul's remarks to be expunged

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri hit back at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "baseless allegations" about his ties to late convicted sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. Puri denied being involved in any illegal activities.

Gandhi, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, claimed that Puri was mentioned several times in files related to the late financier. Puri dismissed Gandhi's claims as having "entertainment value" and containing "elements of buffoonery".

Puri said he was referenced in the 'Epstein files only "three-four times out of a three million emails" and their meetings had nothing to do with the late financier's alleged human trafficking ring.

"We talked about 'Make in India," Puri told press in New Delhi on Wednesday, adding that he met Epstein because he was part of the Indian delegation. Puri noted that he was appointed as India's Ambassador to the UN in 2008, and served in the position for eight years, which is when he met Epstein "two-three times".

Union Minister for Oil Hardeep Singh Puri —*PTI*

"I had no interest in Epstein's activities. For them, I was not the 'right person'," he also said, adding that Epstein had called him "two-faced".

Puri also added that he no ties to business giant Gautam Adani, who Gandhi charged with being part of Epstein's ring.

Meanwhile, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Gandhi's speech was "full of lies" and the ruling alliance will seek to expunge from the records.

Soon after Gandhi's speech during a debate on the Union Budget, Rijiju said the ruling alliance members will serve a notice before the chair seeking authentication of whatever the LoP has spoken.

"We will demand expunging of whatever lies Gandhi has spoken," he told press. "I know he cannot authenticate (what he spoke) because he lied in the House."

He also said that Gandhi made allegations against Puri without giving any notice, which is a breach of privilege. "We will file the necessary notice with the Speaker."

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman alleged that it was the Congress-led UPA that sold the country, hitting back at Gandhi's allegations that Prime Minister Modi surrendered the country because he was blackmailed by foreign powers. —*PTI*

All 6 stanzas of Vande Mataram must before N'atl Anthem

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Union Home Ministry has directed that all six stanzas of the National Song Vande Mataram, shall be sung first when the National Song and National Anthem are to be played together.

The Home Ministry on 28 January gave the first set of protocols for singing the National Song, written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, directing that six stanzas of it, shall be sung on official functions such as the arrival of the President, unfurling of the tricolour, and speeches of Governors.

The assembly where the National Song is sung shall stand in attention, it said.

The work in school shall

begin with the playing of the National Song. The Centre is observing the 150th year of Vande Mataram.

According to the order, the official version of the National Song shall be played accompanied by mass singing on these occasions – on the unfurling of the National Flag, on cultural occasions or ceremonial functions other than parades, and on the arrival of the President at any government or public function, among others.

The order said that on all occasions when the National Song is sung, the official version shall be recited accompanied by mass singing.

The order, all the same, said it is not possible to give an exhaustive list of occasions on which the singing of the official version of the National Song can be permitted. —*PTI*

TONES DOWN LANGUAGE

US drops reference to pulses in revised trade deal fact sheet

WASHINGTON, 11 FEB

The White House has removed 'pulses' from a list of American products on which India will eliminate or reduce tariffs, in a revised fact sheet on the interim trade deal.

The White House had issued a fact sheet on 'The United States and India Announce Historic Trade Deal (Interim Agreement),' days after India and the US announced in a joint statement the framework for the interim agreement regarding reciprocal and mutually beneficial trade.

An initial version of the fact sheet had highlighted key terms of the agreement including, that India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products.

The fact sheet had also said that India committed to buy more American products and purchase over USD 500 billion of US energy, information and communication technology, agricultural, coal, and other products.

The revised fact sheet issued Tuesday removed the reference made regarding pulses and changed the word committed to 'intends'.

Meanwhile, India has already started "winding down" its purchases of Russian oil, and New Delhi is "ramping back up" buying energy from America and other sources, United States Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said.

Greer said the US and India discussed about oil purchases from Venezuela and that before the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, "the Indians did not procure Russian oil."

He said that India was refining Russian oil and selling it to Europeans. —*PTI*

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—FREEPIK

"You mentioned that Donald Trump announced India's agreement to no longer purchase Russian oil. I have not heard such a statement from anyone else, including Prime Minister Modi and other Indian leaders

—Sergei Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister

Trade unions to observe nationwide strike today

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

A joint forum of trade unions has called for a nationwide strike on Thursday to protest against the Centre's "anti-worker, anti-farmer and pro-corporate" policies.

Farmer unions have also announced nationwide protests on Thursday against the India–United States trade agreement signed last week, calling it a threat to agriculture, dairy and rural livelihoods.

Trade unions claim nearly 30 crore workers across 600 districts may participate. All India Trade Union Congress said services in electricity, gas, water supply, health and education may be hit. Major banking unions will also strike, with broad support across the sector.

Meanwhile, the All India Power Engineers Federation announced 2.7 million employees will protest against privatisation, the 2025 Electricity Bill, the 2026 National Electricity Policy, and new labor codes. Unions are also demanding the restoration of MGNREGA.. —*PTI*

What will remain closed?
Banks, buses, factories, markets, shops, schools could see disruption.

What will remain open?
Hospitals & medical services, pharmacies, , fire and rescue operations, milk, airports, digital banking.

SC QUESTIONS PROTOCOL IN AI PROBE

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to file a brief report detailing the "procedural protocol" followed in the investigation into the 12 June, 2025 Air India crash, after being informed that the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board (AAIB) probe is in its final stages.

Air India's Boeing 787-8 flight AI171, travelling from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick, crashed shortly after take-off, killing 260 people, including 241 passengers and crew. Former Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani was among the victims. The sole survivor was British national Vishwashkumar Ramesh.

A Bench led by CJI Surya Kant observed that the AAIB's role is to determine the cause of the crash, not to assign motive. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the court that some aspects of the inquiry must be conducted abroad and suggested listing the pleas after three weeks.

Petitions filed seek a court-monitored probe. The court said it would await the AAIB's final report. —*PTI*

ON THE WAY TO BUY MILK

2 toddlers run over by school bus in B'luru

BENGALURU, 11 FEB

Two toddlers were killed after a school bus ran over them in Thanisandra under the Hennur Traffic Police Station limits on Wednesday, police said.

The victims, Varsha, 2, and Bhanu, 4, were riding with Nagana Gowda, a police constable, who was taking his daughter Varsha and his elder brother's daughter Bhanu on his motorcycle to buy milk. Bhanu had arrived from Raichur four days earlier, as the family was planning to admit her to a school in the city.

According to police, Gowda was waiting to cross the road when a school bus taking a turn struck the two-wheeler. The impact threw Gowda and the children onto the road. Tragically, both children fell under the wheels of the bus before the driver could bring the vehicle to a halt. Gowda escaped unhurt.

The bus driver was arrested and a case has been registered against him for rash and negligent driving. Police suspect that negligent driving led to the accident, and further investigation is under way.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic, North Division) visited the scene soon after the incident and conducted an inspection. —*PTI*

Nagana Gowda was taking Varsha and Bhanu on his motorcycle —*x*

Mysuru to see mass Hanuman Chalisa recitation on V-Day

MYSURU, 11 FEB

A massive Hanuman Chalisa recitation program has been organised in Mysuru on 14 February (Valentine's Day). This event will be held at the Maharaja College Grounds under the guidance of Sri Ganapathi Sachchidananda Swamiji. A "Mahayagna" will take place in the presence of lakhs of devotees, with thousands of participants from various states across the country joining together to chant the Hanuman Chalisa. Speaking at a press conference in Mysuru, Ganapathi Sacchidananda Swamiji said that the Ashram has organised this mega event after a nearly 10 year break. Participants can chant Hanuman chalisa in Kannada. Mahashivathri jagarana and Girija Kalyana event will be held on 15 February as part of Maha Shivaratri festival at the same venue.—*SALAR NEWS*

22 MLAs to go to Aus, NZ next week; CM says 'gothilla'

BENGALURU, 11 FEB

Amid speculations of a foreign trip by Congress legislators against the backdrop of the power tussle, MLA C Puttarangashetty on Wednesday said 22 of them will head to Australia and New Zealand next week. He said the trip is being organised by the State's Animal Husbandry Department to study international livestock and sericulture practices. Minister K Venkatesh will be leading the legislators. However, CM Siddaramaiah, earlier in the day, said he was not aware of it and that the MLAs may be funding the excursion personally. Asked whether the CM has been briefed, Puttarangashetty replied, "not sure." —*PTI*

Bommai salms 'closure' of 638 govt schools

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

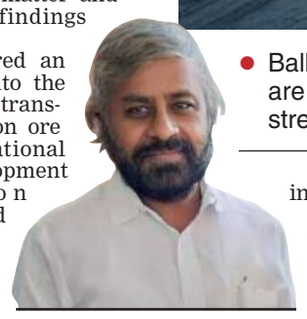
Former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai alleged that the "precarious" financial condition of the State government was the reason behind 638 government schools reportedly closing. Speaking to press in New Delhi on Wednesday, the MP said that the State government is "unable to pay salaries. That is why they are closing institutions. This is anti-Kannada education." The Congress has said that move to close the schools was part of the Karnataka Public Schools (KPS Magnet), where it will merge underperforming schools with schools that have good facilities. —*Agencies*

Govt orders probe into NMDC iron ore 'smuggling'

Report to be submitted within 7 days, says Khandre

BENGALURU, 11 FEB

—AI



- Ballari, Chitradurga, Kudremukh and Tumakuru are notorious illegal mining hubs. Khandre stressed the importance of environmental rights

Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre ordered an investigation into the alleged illegal transportation of iron ore linked to the central-owned NMDC and directed officials to submit a report within seven days.

Khandre on Wednesday instructed the department's Additional Chief Secretary and the Head of the Forest Force to constitute a three-member inquiry committee headed by an Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests to investigate the matter and furnish its findings within a week.

"I have ordered an investigation into the alleged illegal transportation of iron ore from the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) and directed that a report be submitted," the Minister said in a statement.

Khandre said the team has been asked to ascertain whether iron ore was illegally transported from forest areas and whether any rules were violated in the process.

He also cited media reports quoting the district Superintendent of Police as stating that around 2,500 tonnes of iron ore had been seized based on information provided by the accused lorry driver.

The Minister emphasised that the probe would examine all aspects of the case and determine if there had been any breach of forest and environmental regulations. —*PTI*

Hope CM keeps his word: Suresh

BENGALURU, 11 FEB

- The comments come after Shivakumar said he and Siddaramaiah had discussed the row in the presence of the High Command

Congress leader DK Suresh said he hoped Chief Minister Siddaramaiah would "keep his word" regarding the alleged power-sharing pact with Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar.

"Even today, I hope that, though delayed, he (CM) will keep his word," Suresh told reporters in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Addressing Shivakumar's visit to New Delhi, Suresh said, "Whenever in Delhi, we meet our party High Command if we get an opportunity."

While some meet the High Command for personal favours, Suresh said his brother "is not such a character".

Asked whether Shivakumar's patience on the leadership issue has become a weakness, he said, "Time will answer everything."

Rumours flared about an alleged "power sharing" agreement between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar. Siddaramaiah, it was said, would step down when the Congress completed its 2.5 year term in the State in November. This reignited after Siddaramaiah's son and MLC Yathindra last week said the High Command had given a clear signal that his father would complete his full five year tenure.

Suresh respond: "I'm not as influential or knowledgeable as he is. Whatever he says is final."

Suresh backed Congress MLA Iqbal Hussain, who questioned why Yathindra didn't get a notice for speaking in favour of Siddaramaiah when the Ramanagara MLA did for voicing a pro-Shivakumar position.

Suresh also said that "some people within our party or Opposition" were seeking to tarnish Shivakumar's image by spreading reports about Congress legislators planning a foreign trip. —*PTI*

Cops stop burial amid 'strange' death case

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 11 FEB

Dramatic scenes unfolded at Ethamakalahalli village on Tuesday when police stopped the burial of a 17-year-old girl who died under suspicious circumstances and shifted her body for post-mortem examination.

Kalyani had been living since childhood with her aunt in Gidnahalli village under Nandagudi police limits in Bengaluru Rural district. She reportedly drowned in a farm pond belonging to a neighbour on Monday evening.

Instead of informing the police immediately, family members transported the body to her native village, Ethamakalahalli, under Chikkaballapur rural police limits, and began performing the last rites. However, some relatives expressed suspicion over the circumstances surrounding her death and alerted authorities.

Her aunt, Munirathnamma, who had adopted her from her sister Narasamma and raised her, maintained that Kalyani accidentally fell into the pond and drowned.

Acting on the information received, Chikkaballapura rural police rushed to the village, halted the burial and shifted the body to the mortuary. They directed that the matter be reported to Nandagudi police for further action. —*SALAR NEWS*

—AI

Girl files fake kidnap case to get college admission

BENGALURU, 11 FEB

Police in Dakshina Kannada have determined that a 16-year-old girl fabricated her claim of an attempted kidnapping and knife attack in order to persuade her parents to secure her admission to a college in Mangaluru city.

The alleged incident was reported on 9 February, within the limits of Belthangady police station, around 57km from Mangaluru.

The junior college student told police that unidentified men in a mini-van tried to force her inside near Kasaba village at about 8.15am while she was travelling towards Belthangady.

She claimed she was attacked with a knife when she resisted.

A passer-by found the girl standing by the roadside in distress with minor bleeding injuries on her shoulder and finger and took her home. He later informed police that he had not noticed any suspicious vehicle in the area.

Investigators examined CCTV footage from several locations but found no evidence to support her account. A medical examination indicated that the injuries were superficial and appeared to be self-inflicted.

During further questioning, the girl admitted staging the incident.

Police said appropriate procedural action is being taken. —*PTI*

'FILL THE ROLES!'

Members of All Karnataka State Students Association protest against the Congress, urging the government to fill vacant govt posts for Polce Sub Inspector (PSI) Civil, Police Constable, Karnataka State Reserve Police (KSRP) and Reserve Sub Inspector (RSI) at Freedom Park in Bengaluru, on Wednesday PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Cops register 151 drug cases under 'Op Suraksha'

BENGALURU, 11 FEB

The Bengaluru City Police have registered 151 cases related to the sale and consumption of narcotic substances since December 2025 as part of a special night-time crackdown titled 'Operation Suraksha'.

According to an official press note, the special drive, undertaken jointly by City police stations and the Central Crime Branch (CCB), targets anti-social elements who gather at public places during the night and engage in unlawful activities.

Under Operation Suraksha, officers and staff of the CCB along with local police personnel conduct night patrols on a daily shift basis in sensitive areas across the City.

During these patrols, individuals disturbing public peace, provoking others, possessing deadly weapons, and habitual rowdies involved in immoral and illegal activities are identified and booked.

"From December 2025, during night-time special operations, 151 cases related to the sale and consumption of narcotic substances have been registered across various police stations," police said.

Police said that since December 2025, as many as 1,280 cases have been registered under the Karnataka Police Act against persons disturbing public peace in sensitive areas.

The individuals concerned were also counselled and warned to prevent repeat offences.

The operation also led to the execution of 39 warrants issued by various courts against absconding accused persons.

One case was registered under the Arms Act, and eight rowdy elements were booked under various sections of BNSS.

During the special drive, police searched 215 houses of rowdy elements across the City.

"Since the commencement of this operation, incidents of chain snatching, mobile snatching, and other related crimes in Bengaluru City have come under control," the release claimed. —*PTI*

—AI

IPL matches at Chinnaswamy to be decided on 12 Feb, says HM

BENGALURU, 11 FEB

Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Wednesday that a meeting will be held on 12 February to decide whether to grant clearance to host cricket matches at Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

The decision hinges on whether the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) has complied with all safety and security requirements.

Matches have been suspended since a tragic stampede during Royal Challengers Bengaluru's IPL victory celebrations on 4 June 2025, which claimed 11 lives.

A panel led by GBA Commissioner Maheshwar Rao will review KSCA's compliance with recommendations from the Justice John Michael Cunha Commission probe report. "We will discuss everything. If satisfied, we will allow." Parameshwara said.

The government previously denied permission in December to host the Vijay Hazare Trophy match at the stadium after KSCA failed to meet safety requirements.

The Commission recommended adequate gates for mass entry and exit, purpose-built queuing and circulation zones separated from public roads and emergency evacuation compliant with international norms. —*PTI*

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

Sustaining Gaganyaan's momentum a must despite hurdles: Shukla

BENGALURU, 11 FEB

- Gaganyaan aims to send a three-member crew on a three-day mission to space and bring them back safely. ISRO plans a launch in 2027

India must continue to pursue its ambitious Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission with sustained enthusiasm despite inherent complexities and unknowns, Group Captain and Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla said on Wednesday.

The Ashoka Chakra awardee noted that only three countries have independently carried out human spaceflight programmes. "As a nation, what we are trying to do with Mission Gaganyaan has only been done by three other countries in the world," he said, adding that its success would place India among an elite group of spacefaring nations.

Gaganyaan aims to send a three-member crew on a three-day mission to space and bring them back safely. According to ISRO, India aims to launch Gaganyaan in 2027. Shukla, one of four astronauts selected, acknowledged delays and hurdles are natural in such cutting-edge ventures. "These are very complex and challenging missions... whatever time it takes, we need to continue to work towards it with the same enthusiasm," he said.

On India–US cooperation in the space sector, Shukla cited his own Axiom mission as an example of how international collaboration can advance space exploration.

Fellow astronaut Group Captain Prasanth Nair urged patience, calling the mission an "inflection point" when India sends "an Indian astronaut on an Indian rocket... and brings him back safely." He said India would become the fourth nation to achieve the feat.

Nair also noted that the moment is important because "when India does something, it does it differently". —*PTI*

IAF Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and Group Captain Prashant B Nair with delegates and students during a session at the US-India Space Business Forum, in Bengaluru on Wednesday —*PTI*

Goa BJP minister acquitted in rape case

PANAJI, 11 FEB

A special court in Goa on Wednesday acquitted BJP MLA and state minister Atanasio Monserrate in a rape case filed against him in 2016. Monserrate, who holds the revenue portfolio, had been accused of raping a minor girl. According to the FIR, the complainant alleged she had been sold to the then St Cruz MLA, who allegedly drugged and sexually assaulted her. The case was initially registered under the Goa Children's Act. However, that charge was later dropped after an ossification test indicated she was above 16 years of age, and sections of the Indian Penal Code were applied instead. A 250-page chargesheet was filed, and 40 witnesses were examined during the trial before his acquittal. —*PTI*

Construction of WB's Babri-style mosque begins

REJINAGAR, 11 FEB

Suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir on Wednesday began construction of a mosque modelled on Ayodhya's Babri Masjid at Rejinagar in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, triggering fresh political debate. Kabir, who recently floated the Janata Unnayan Party (JUP), said the structure would be completed within two years at an estimated cost of Rs 50–55 crore. Supporters joined the brick-laying ceremony, with many carrying bricks as a mark of participation. "There's no force on earth which can stop the construction of this mosque," Kabir said, asserting that people were free to practise their religion. He postponed a planned 235km 'Babri Yatra' citing Madhyamik exams and announced a 22km march instead. —*PTI*

UP Budget: Rs 14,953 crore for social welfare

LUCKNOW, 11 FEB

Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna on Wednesday earmarked Rs 14,953 crore for social welfare, Rs 2,058 crore for minority welfare and Rs 2,140 crore for divyangjan empowerment in the 2026-27 Budget, the last full Budget before next year's Assembly polls. Social welfare allocation rose eight per cent, with Rs 8,950 crore for old age and farmer pensions covering 67.5 lakh beneficiaries. The Chief Minister's Mass Marriage Scheme outlay is Rs 750 crore, with enhanced aid of Rs 1.01 lakh per beneficiary. Minority scholarships received Rs 391 crore. Divyang pensions were allocated Rs 1,470 crore. Other Backward Classes welfare got Rs 3,402 crore, while tribal initiatives under PM-JANMAN continue. —*PTI*

—*ANI*

Sunetra Pawar calls on Modi, Amit Shah in New Delhi

MUMBAI, 11 FEB

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Wednesday, a day after taking charge at Mantralaya in Mumbai. She also met Union Home Minister Amit Shah during her after her arrival here on Tuesday night. Sunetra Pawar, who took oath as the state's first woman Deputy CM on 31 January, was accompanied by her sons Parth and Jay, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) working president Praful Patel and party's Lok Sabha MP Sunil Tatkare during her meetings . The Deputy Chief Minister, currently a Rajya Sabha member, also visited Parliament which is having its budget session. Sunetra Pawar replaced her husband Ajit Pawar in the Maharashtra cabinet after his death in a plane crash at the Baramati airport in Pune district on 28 January. —*PTI*

FM starving non-BJP ruled states: Oppn MPs in LS

TMC calls FM 'Reverse' Robin Hood; DMK flags empty vows

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Participating in a discussion on General Budget 2026-27, the opposition members on Wednesday accused Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman of starving the non-BJP ruled states of funds.

Launching a frontal attack on the Centre and particularly the Union Finance Minister the Trinamool Congress, DMK and Shiv Sena (UBT) members accused them of funding the ruling allies while starving the opponents.

"This is not a model of cooperative federalism; this is a model of subscription-based federalism," TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee said hitting out at the government.

Banerjee accused Sitharaman of trying to practice the 'Robin Hood model' in reverse. "She drains the poor through taxation and inflation, while rewarding the rich with concessions and privileges," he said. The TMC leader said the FM did not mention West Bengal even once in her 85-minute budget speech.

DMK leader TR Baalu described the budget presented by Sitharaman as "rhetoric presented by a sloganeering government."

He said some initiatives, such as the employment-linked insurance scheme, research development and innovation fund, that were announced in previous Budget, have not taken off as yet. He also voiced concern over the trade deal with the US.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in the House during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Wednesday —*PTI*

Vande Bharat AC chair car fares much lower than those in China, Japan, France: Vaishnaw

The DMK leader said the Centre government has not granted funds for phase two of the metro rail project and for the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan.

Shiv Sena-UBT leader Anil Desai said Maharashtra contributed Rs 5.5 lakh crore in taxes to the national exchequer, but received less amount from Centre, while NCP-SP member Bajrang Sonwane pointed out that none of the recommendations discussed by GST Council were taken into consideration in the Union Budget.

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram termed the interim trade agreement with the US as "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery and inside an enigma." —*PTI*

Birla rectifies flaws in notice to impeach him

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The opposition notice for removal of Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla could have been rejected due to flaws in drafting, but he directed officials to get it rectified so that it can be listed at the earliest, parliamentary sources said.

As many as 118 opposition MPs had signed the notice submitted to Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh on Tuesday afternoon. Later in the day, the opposition withdrew the notice and replaced it with another one correcting the date.

"The notice reportedly mentions the events of February 2025 four times, on the basis of which it could have been rejected as per the rules," the sources said.

The Speaker directed the Lok Sabha Secretariat to have the defective notice corrected and then proceed with it.

"Birla ordered prompt action as per the rules," a functionary said.

Sources said upon receipt of the revised notice, a speedy review will be conducted as per the rules. —*PTI*

SAYS ASSAM CM

'2.43L doubtful voters deleted after BJP's complaint'

GUWAHATI, 11 FEB

Assam Chief Minister **Himanta Biswa Sarma** on Wednesday claimed that lakhs of 'doubtful voters' were deleted during the Special Revision (SR) of the electoral roll in the state.

The deletions were made based on complaints by BJP workers during the SR exercise.

His comment comes a day after the Election Commission (EC) had published the final voters' list for poll-bound Assam with over 2.43 lakh names deleted from the draft roll.

"This is only the beginning. Names of more such people will be deleted when the Special Intensive Revision will be conducted," Sarma said at a press conference here.

Despite threats and intimidations, BJP activists filed complaints against doubtful voters, he said.

At the end of claims and objections, the final electoral roll was published in Assam on Tuesday with a total of 2.49 crore voters, a decrease by 0.97 per cent from the draft list.

Sarma also said, "The war on illegal Bangladeshi Muslim (immigrants) will continue."

Additionally, Sarma termed the Supreme Court's judgment allowing the state to carry out evictions of over 1.25 lakh bighas of forest land after clearance by a specially constituted committee as "landmark", saying it will streamline anti-encroachment drives.

SC to list new plea against Assam CM

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to consider listing another plea filed by four people seeking a direction against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over a series of alleged hate speeches targeting Muslims in the state. The fresh petition filed by former professor Hiren Gohain, former DGP of Assam Harekrishna Deka, senior journalist Paresh Chandra Malakar and senior advocate Santanu Borthakur, alleged that Sarma promoted enmity and hatred on grounds of religion, language, place of birth. It said he allegedly used expressions such as "Miya" and "Bangladeshi" against Bengali-origin Muslims in Assam. —*PTI*

GOGOI'S PAK REPORT TO CENTRE

Sarma said the SIT report on state Congress President Gaurav Gogoi's alleged 'Pakistan links' will be amended to incorporate 'disclosures' made by the MP at a recent press conference, including his visit to Rawalpindi district, and then referred to the Centre for further probe. —*PTI*

EC to transfer WB officials serving for 3 years in same place

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, 11 FEB

The Election Commission (EC) has directed the transfer of senior West Bengal government and police officials who have served over three years in the same post or district, a senior poll body official said on Wednesday.

The order applies to district magistrates, additional DMs, block development officers, sub-divisional officers and other district-level authorities. Senior police officers, including IGs, DIGs, SPs and additional SPs, are also covered.

"The EC has decided that officers who have completed over three years in a particular district or post must be transferred to ensure free and fair elections," the official said. Those posted at the State headquarters are exempt.

The commission has informed the Chief Secretary for immediate compliance and directed that officials who served as DMs, returning officers or inspectors during the last Assembly polls should not be posted in the same districts for the upcoming elections.

GOA'S FINAL POLL ROLL ON 21 FEB

The EC also said Goa's final electoral rolls under the SIR will be published on 21 February, 2026, instead of 14 February. —*PTI*

Stalin says alliance between DMK and Congress intact

CHENNAI, 11 FEB

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **MK Stalin** on Wednesday said that the alliance between the DMK and the Congress is intact, dismissing reports of fissures between the two parties.

He also rejected the possibility of a coalition government in Tamil Nadu, shutting the door for the Congress party, some of whose senior leaders have been raising the matter.

Making it clear that there was no confusion, Stalin, who is also the DMK Chief, said, "Sharing power in the government does not suit Tamil Nadu. The Congress also knows that very well."

"Some people are stirring up the issue of power-sharing just to cause a rift in the alliance. That tactic will not work," he said at the India Today Roundtable conference here.

Meanwhile, after its principal ally Congress expressed concern over the "delay" in initiating seat-sharing talks for the upcoming Assembly elections, DMK has announced that a panel will be formed to commence negotiations from 22 February. DMK said the committee will be formed soon by Stalin.

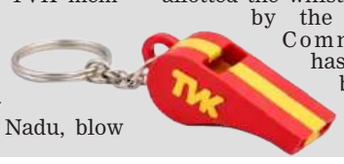
Additionally, Senior DMK leader TKS Elangovan on Wednesday dismissed reports of Congress exerting "undue pressure" on the party for the 2026 Assembly polls. The former MP suggested that such claims were likely being floated by certain individuals within the national party who "want to show off." —*PTI*

TVK FUMES AT WHISTLE BAN IN TAMIL NADU DISTRICT

SIVAGANGA, 11 FEB

A municipal ward in Sivaganga has replaced the use of whistles by sanitation workers with portable speakers to announce garbage collection, triggering outrage among TVK members.

Sanitation workers in Sivaganga, as well as in many parts of Tamil Nadu, blow whistles to signal their arrival.



The decision, by a DMK Councillor, which has come in the wake of actor-turned politician Vijay's party, Tamizhaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), being allotted the whistle symbol by the Election Commission, has created a buzz in the political circles.

TVK sources claimed that the local authorities were worried that the continued use of whistles by civic workers could be a form of indirect campaigning for the party.

Meanwhile, the TVK targeted the DMK over the ban on 'whistle' at Chepauk stadium and claimed that the Dravidian major was rattled by the increasing popularity of the party. —*PTI*

T'gana municipal polls: 73% voter turnout till 5pm

HYDERABAD, 11 FEB

Polling for the Telangana Municipal Elections-2026 came to an end on Wednesday, with voter turnout of 73.01 per cent recorded till 5pm.

Only people who entered polling stations before 5pm were allowed to vote and others were barred.

The voting to elect Councillors and Corporators began at 7am. The polls were conducted in 2,569 wards in 116 municipalities and 412 wards in seven municipal corporations across the State.

The polling percentage which was 11.6 per cent at 9am, increased to 28.24 per cent at 11am, 48.52 per cent till 1pm and 62.09 per cent till 3pm.

If there were to be any re-polling, it would be conducted on 12 February. The votes polled will be counted on 13 February. The results would be declared soon after conclusion of the counting, the Telangana State Election Commission said

After administration of oath to the elected ward members (Councillors or Corporators) on 16 February, indirect elections to mayor/chairperson or deputy mayor/vice chairperson would be held.

The ruling Congress aims to consolidate its position as the dominant party in state politics, while the BJP hopes to emerge as a credible alternative to both the Congress and the BRS.

Having suffered setbacks in the 2023 Assembly polls and 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BRS performed well in the Gram Panchayat polls and is keen to win in the municipal elections. —*Agencies*

Every outburst not security threat: SC to NIA on Murshidabad riots

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) invocation of UAPA in the Beldanga violence case, stating that not every emotional reaction amounts to a threat to economic security.

The Court asked the NIA to file a report in a sealed cover before the Calcutta High Court, justifying the invocation of a UAPA provision pertaining to terror acts in a case related to repeated incidents of violence and unrest in West Bengal's Murshidabad district.

Disposing of an appeal of the West Bengal government, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi also asked the state government to approach the high court with its grievances against the NIA probe into the Murshidabad violence case. The top court said the Calcutta HC can also examine the state government's challenge to the Centre's decision to order an NIA probe in the case.

During the hearing, the bench asked the NIA what was the basis for invoking the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA), to justify its probe into the recent violence at Beldanga in Murshidabad.

The NIA, which was handed over the probe by the Ministry of Home Affairs on 28 January, invoked Section 15 (1) (a) of the UAPA in the case. The provision deals with terrorist acts, which can be slapped on whoever indulging in any act with an intent to threaten the unity, integrity, security, economic security, or sovereignty of India or with an intent to strike terror.

It also referred to similar violence that took place in April 2025, observing that despite the high court granting liberty to NIA to examine whether it could probe the matter, the agency did not act promptly. —*PTI*

BJP gets BMC mayor post after 44 yrs with Ritu's election

MUMBAI, 11 FEB

Ritu Tawde on Wednesday became Mumbai's 78th Mayor, only the second BJP corporator to hold the post in 44 years. Shiv Sena's Sanjay Ghadi was elected deputy mayor unopposed at a special Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) meeting following the 15 January polls.

The BJP emerged as the single largest party with 89 seats in the 227-member House, while ally Shiv Sena secured 29, taking the ruling alliance past the halfway mark. The Shiv Sena (UBT) won 65 seats. Though largely ceremonial, the mayor's post carries strong political symbolism in Mumbai.

Meanwhile, in Chandrapur, BJP's Sangeeta Khandekar won the mayoral election by one vote after Sena (UBT) corporators backed the BJP, despite Congress emerging as the largest party with 27 seats in the 66-member civic body. Sena (UBT)'s Prashant Danav was elected deputy mayor.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut blamed Congress for the mess. "Local leaders took the decision due to internal divisions. "This does not mean we have joined hands with the BJP," he said. —*PTI*

TO DEEPEN MUTUAL TRUST

India-China partners not rivals, says Chinese FM

Executive Vice Foreign Minister of China Ma Zhaoxu shakes hands with Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri during India-China Strategic Dialogue —*ANI*

BEIJING, 11 FEB

India and China should handle their ties from a strategic and long-term perspective, properly managing differences and expanding cooperation, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has said on Tuesday's strategic dialogue between the two countries held in New Delhi.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Chinese Executive Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ma Zhaoxu held the India-China Strategic Dialogue, during which they discussed the whole gamut of the bilateral ties.

Ma is in India to participate in the BRICS Sherpa meeting.

Both sides had friendly, candid and in-depth communication on the international and regional situation, respective internal and external policies, international and regional issues of shared interest, and China-India ties, a Chinese Ministry press release here said on Misri, Ma talks.

Both sides underlined that, given the complex and profound changes in the international situation, China and India should work together to earnestly implement the important common understandings reached between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, view and handle China-India ties from a strategic and long-term perspective, it said.

As part of the common understanding between the two leaders, both countries should uphold the strategic perception that China and India are cooperative partners instead of rivals, and the two countries are each other's development opportunity instead of a threat, it said.

Both nations should deepen mutual trust and expand cooperation, properly manage differences, & promote the development of ties along a sound & steady track, it said. —*PTI*

16 private schools in Punjab receive hoax bomb threats

CHANDIGARH, 11 FEB

Sixteen private schools in Punjab's Mohali received bomb threat emails on Wednesday, triggering evacuation and prompting detailed anti-sabotage checks by police. However, no suspicious or explosive material was discovered at any of the locations. Authorities of these schools had received the threat mails between 7.30am - 8pm. The schools remained close for students as security was mounted at them. Around 300 policemen, including additional force and specialised teams from neighbouring districts of Fatehgarh Sahib, Rupnagar, and Chandigarh were involved in the search operation. An FIR was lodged, and the case has been referred to the Cyber Police Station in Mohali to ascertain the origin of the threatening email and conduct an investigation.—*PTI*

—*ANI*

MCOCA invoked for firing at Rohit Shetty's house

MUMBAI, 11 FEB

The Mumbai police has invoked the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) against the accused involved in firing at filmmaker Rohit Shetty's residence in Juhu here earlier this month. The police so far arrested five persons, who were produced before the special MCOCA court on Wednesday. The accused were Aditya Gayaki, Siddharth Yenpure, Samarth Pomaji, Swapnil Sakat and Asaram Fasale. Search is on for Lawrence Bishnoi gang member Shubham Lonkar, who took responsibility for the firing. Lonkar is also wanted in NCP leader Baba Siddique murder and firing at Bollywood actor Salman Khan's residence. The same gang may be behind the threat received by Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh, according to the police sources.—*PTI*

UP Dalit man killed in clash over power connection

BANDA, 11 FEB

A Dalit ration dealer was allegedly beaten to death during a fight between two groups over connecting an electricity wire from a pole in Uttar Pradesh's Chitrakoot. The incident took place on Tuesday in Laudhiya Mafi village in Raipura, when a fight broke out between two groups over the electricity connection. Members of one group allegedly assaulted village ration dealer Sukhnandan, 70, with sticks, leaving him seriously injured. He reportedly died on the way to the hospital. The police registered a case of murder against Jeevanlal Rajput, Amit, Anoop and Chandrashekhar Rajput. While Rajput has been arrested, efforts are underway to apprehend the others. The body has been sent for post-mortem. —*PTI*

'Dhurandhar' singer stops show over harassment of women

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

A video of singer Jasmine Sandlas pausing her concert midway at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here after noticing a group of women being harassed by men has gone viral. Many social media users and journalists shared the video from the concert held on 7 February. In the video, the singer of 'Dhurandhar' fame is seen asking security personnel to remove two guys, who had been troubling these women. Addressing the crowd in Punjabi, she further said that she would not perform till the time women don't feel safe in her concert. Sandlas was praised for taking a stand on women's safety. "Respect to Jasmine Sandlas for taking a stand when it truly mattered..," said a user on social media platform X.—*PTI*

Delhi cops notice to Penguin over Naravane memoir

FIR filed amid claims of illegal circulation

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Delhi Police's Special Cell has issued a notice to Penguin Random House India seeking clarification over the alleged circulation of an unpublished memoir by former Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane, an official said on Wednesday.

The move follows reports that the manuscript of Naravane's memoir, 'Four Stars of Destiny', was circulated in digital and other formats prior to its official publication.

The alleged leak has sparked competing claims over the status of the book and the authenticity of versions said to be in alleged circulation.

According to the police, the Special Cell has formally approached the publishing house through the notice, posing multiple queries and seeking detailed responses regarding the manuscript's handling and distribution safeguards.

"Delhi Police Special Cell has issued a notice to Penguin India.

Through the notice, several questions have been asked, and responses have been sought," a senior police officer said.

Officials added that allegations relating to the unauthorised dissemination of the manuscript led to the registration of an FIR. The matter remains under investigation, with police examining the source and extent of the alleged circulation.—*PTI*

Members of the Indian Youth Congress hold a placard depicting the cover of an unreleased book titled 'Four Stars of Destiny' by former Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane during a protest in New Delhi —*PTI*

AFTER US-INDIA TRADE DEAL

USTR scraps X post showing PoK, Aksai Chin part of India

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 11 FEB

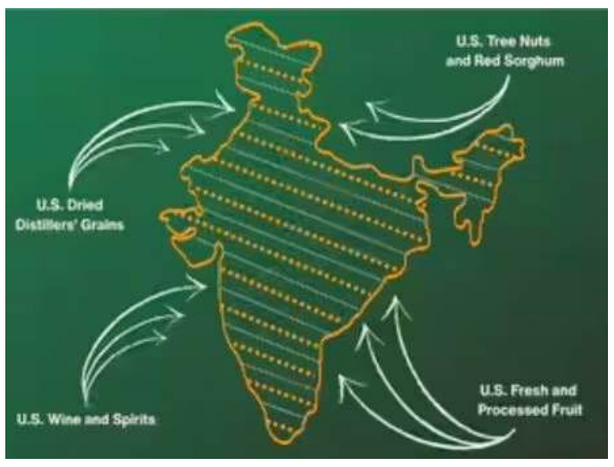
The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) has deleted a social media post that featured a map of India showing the entire region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), including Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), and Aksai Chin as part of Indian territory.

The post was shared last week on X after India and the US announced details of a bilateral interim trade agreement framework. It included information about the deal alongside a map of India. The map showed the full region of J&K, including PoK, as well as Aksai Chin, claimed by China, within India's borders, without any demarcation indicating disputed areas.

The specific post has since been removed from the USTR's X handle without explanation. In earlier instances, maps have often marked PoK and Aksai Chin with demarcated lines to reflect their disputed status.

New Delhi maintains that the entire Union Territory of J&K "has been, is and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India," and asserts that Aksai Chin is part of its territory based on historical claims.

India and the United States announced on Friday night that they have reached a framework for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA) under which both sides will reduce import duties on a number of goods to boost two-way trade. —*PTI*



—*PTI*

- New Delhi maintains that the entire Union Territory of J&K "has been, is and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India," and asserts that Aksai Chin is part of its territory based on historical claims

Centre: No health grounds to release Wangchuk

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Centre on Wednesday told the Supreme Court that climate activist Sonam Wangchuk has been medically examined 24 times since his detention and is "fit, hale and hearty", opposing his release on health grounds.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed a bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and PB Varale that the grounds for Wangchuk's detention under the National Security Act, 1980, continue to subsist. "We have examined his health periodically. He is fit, hale and hearty. He had some digestive issue, he is being treated. We can't make exceptions like this," Mehta said.

He added, "The grounds on which the detention order was passed, continue. It will not be possible to release him on health grounds. It may not be desirable also. We have given utmost consideration."

Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj alleged Wangchuk was a "chief provocateur" in violent protests and had instigated youths, a contention the bench questioned, observing that his statements appeared to condemn violence and caution against unlawful methods.

The court was hearing a habeas corpus plea filed by his wife, Gitanjali Angmo, challenging his detention as illegal and seeking his release. Under the NSA, authorities can order preventive detention for up to 12 months. —*Agencies*

SC REPRIMANDS LAWYER OVER 'DEROGATORY' FACEBOOK POST

The Supreme Court on Wednesday reprimanded advocate Deepa Joseph over a "derogatory" Facebook post targeting a woman who accused Kerala Congress MLA Rahul Mamkoottathil of rape, and refused to entertain her plea apprehending arrest.

A bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi expressed strong displeasure at the language used. "Being a lady, what sort of comments have you made... Had it been a man, we would have got him arrested," it said.

Joseph argued her post relied on information from the complainant's husband and was not defamatory.

The bench dismissed her plea, asking her to seek relief before the High Court. - PTI

Priya Kapur accuses mother-in-law of perjury

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday issued notice to Rani Kapur, mother of late industrialist Sunjay Kapur, on an application by her daughter-in-law Priya Kapur alleging perjury in the ongoing dispute over the RK Family Trust.

Justice Mini Pushkarna sought Rani's response and listed the matter for hearing in March. "Issue notice. Notice is accepted by the counsel for non-applicants," the court recorded.

Priya alleged there are "unimpeachable documents", including affidavits and photographs, to show Rani made a "deliberate and false statement on oath" claiming she neither signed nor read the trust deed. She has also sought dismissal of the suit, alleging suppression of material facts and abuse of process.

Rani, 80, has challenged the trust as "forged, fabricated and fraudulent", alleging she was unlawfully divested of control over the Sona Group estate and her late husband's legacy. Earlier, the court urged the family to resolve the dispute "peacefully" through mediation. —*Agencies*

The accused, Kamruddin alias Baba, has been arrested by the Delhi police —*ANI SCREENGRAB*

Delhi occultist kills 3 with poison-laced 'ladoos', held

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

An alleged occult practitioner has been arrested for killing three people by feeding them poison-laced ladoos during a ritual promising a financial windfall, police said on Wednesday.

The accused, Kamruddin alias Baba from Firozabad in Uttar Pradesh, reportedly operated tantric centres in Loni and Firozabad. He was wanted in two similar murder cases in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Police said he lured the victims Randhir,76, Shiv Naresh, 42 and Laxmi 40, with promises of 'dhanvarsha' and instructed them to bring Rs 2 lakh in cash, along with liquor and soft drinks, for a special pooja. On 8 February, the trio were found unconscious in a car in Paschim Vihar and were declared dead at hospital.

Investigators believe Kamruddin travelled with them from Loni to Delhi, gave them poisoned sweets and drinks, and fled with the cash after they lost consciousness. CCTV footage, call records and surveillance corroborated his presence. —*PTI*

Court bins driver's surrender claim in Lamborghini crash case

KOLLAM, 11 FEB

In a fresh twist to the Kanpur Lamborghini Revuelto crash, a 45-year-old man, Mohan, on Wednesday claimed he, not Shivam Mishra, son of tobacco baron K K Mishra, was driving when the luxury car hit pedestrians and vehicles on Sunday, injuring at least six people on VIP Road in Gwaltoli around 3 pm.

Speaking outside court, Mohan alleged Shivam suffered a seizure moments before the crash.

"I was driving... Suddenly, he had a seizure and fell on me. I got scared... The car hit a three-wheeler, climbed the divider and stopped," he said, adding he later stepped out as bystanders gathered at the spot.

However, a district court rejected Mohan's surrender plea after police stated he was neither named nor wanted in the case.

Prosecuting Officer Nagendra Kumar Mishra said the court also sought a technical and forensic report before considering release of the seized vehicle.

Police have maintained Shivam was driving. Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Atul Kumar Srivastava and Commissioner Raghubir Lal cited CCTV footage, eyewitness accounts and videos from the scene.

The FIR, initially against an unidentified person, now names Shivam under rash and negligent driving provisions.

Shivam's family claims he suffers from epilepsy and is undergoing treatment in Delhi, denying overspeeding or intoxication.

Police said they will soon issue a notice to him to join the probe and record his statement as investigations continue. The incident has drawn significant public and political attention, with further legal proceedings expected in the coming days. —*Agencies*

Ex-TDB prez Vasu granted bail in Sabarimala case

KOLLAM, 11 FEB

A Vigilance Court on Wednesday granted bail to former Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) president N Vasu, the third accused in an alleged gold misappropriation case linked to the Sabarimala temple. He is charged in a single case relating to the Sreekovil door frame.

A copy of the bail order is yet to be released and the conditions imposed remain unclear. Officials said Vasu is expected to be released from jail later in the day.

Vasu was arrested on 11 November, last year by the SIT probing the alleged misappropriation of gold. His arrest was one of the most high-profile developments in the case, which has drawn significant public and political attention in Kerala. —*PTI*

TO FORM 5-MEMBER PANEL

Kerala to study digital addiction among children: Sivankutty

T'PURAM, 11 FEB

Kerala General Education and Labour Minister V Sivankutty on Wednesday said a detailed study would be conducted on digital addiction among children, describing it as one of the most widely discussed issues of the present time.

Addressing media here, he said that at a time when artificial intelligence and other sectors are undergoing explosive changes globally, the state needs to examine whether the issue (digital addiction) requires serious study and, if necessary, legislative measures.

He said continuous complaints received by the Education Department and certain incidents indicate that the time to address the issue seriously has already arrived.

The matter was also discussed by the Curriculum Committee, he added. Based on these discussions, it has been decided to constitute a five-member expert committee under the chairpersonship of K Vasuki who will give its recommendations.

Following a detailed scrutiny, a government order will be issued and the recommendations will be implemented from the coming academic year, Sivankutty added. —*PTI*

Minister Sivankutty addresses media —*ANI*

- At a time when Artificial Intelligence and other sectors are undergoing changes, the state needs to examine whether the issue requires serious study

Nitish Katara murder: HC bins Yadav's release plea based on furlough

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday rejected Vikas Yadav's plea for furlough, upholding a 29 October, 2025 order denying him temporary release. Yadav is serving a 25-year sentence without remission for the 2002 murder of business executive Nitish Katara.

Justice Ravinder Dudeja ruled there was no ground to interfere with the jail authorities' decision.

Yadav, son of UP politician DP Yadav, was convicted along with cousin Vishal Yadav and Sukhdev Yadav for kidnapping and killing Katara over his alleged relationship with Bharti Yadav. In 2016, the Supreme Court awarded Vikas and Vishal 25 years without remission; Sukhdev received 20 years. —*PTI*

What's wrong in calling Salman at RSS chief's event: DyCM Shinde

MUMBAI, 11 FEB

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has defended the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for inviting actor Salman Khan to an event addressed by its chief Mohan Bhagwat, and sought to know what was wrong in having the Bollywood actor at the function.

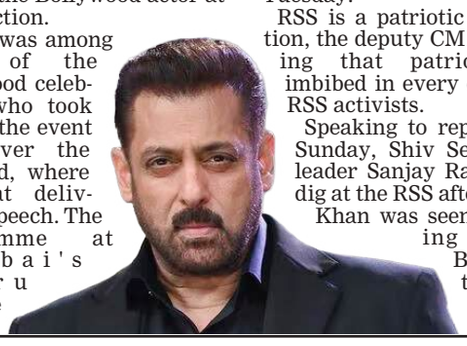
Khan was among some of the Bollywood celebrities who took part in the event held over the weekend, where Bhagwat delivered a speech. The programme at Mumbai's Nehru Centre was organised as part of the RSS' centenary celebrations.

Shinde said Khan is an Indian national and believes in the country's tradition and culture.

"What is wrong in inviting Salman Khan for the RSS event," Shinde, who heads the ruling Shiv Sena, asked on Tuesday.

RSS is a patriotic organisation, the deputy CM said, adding that patriotism is imbibed in every cell of the RSS activists.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut took a dig at the RSS after Salman Khan was seen interacting with Bhagwat at the event. —*PTI*



A BOUQUET OF LOVE

Bengalureans shop for flowers at City Market on Wednesday in the run-up to Valentine's Day *-MOHAMMED ASAD*

What do Bangladesh polls means for India and Pak?

As Bangladesh prepares to hold its first elections since the 2024 ouster of Sheikh Hasina, its longest-serving prime minister, the outcome will define Dhaka's relations with the most important regional powers — China, India, and Pakistan.

Nearly 128 million Bangladeshis will head to the polls on 12 February to bring in new leadership after an 18-month rule of the current caretaker administration.

The interim government, led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, took control following a student-led uprising that ended 15 years in power of Hasina and her Awami League party.

The two main parties out of the 51 competing for power are the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami. The Awami League, which for decades has had close ties with India, was excluded from the election ballot over its role in the deadly crackdown on the 2024 student-led protests, in which 1,400 people were killed.

While Bangladesh's relationship India has deteriorated since the fall of Hasina, who has been in self-exile in New Delhi, the period of diplomatic strain is expected to ease when the new government takes office.

"Whoever comes to power in Bangladesh, due to domestic pressure in the country, relationships with India need a resetting," Humayun Kabir, former ambassador to the US, told Arab News.

"It's anticipated that India will also engage with the new government, but they will protect their interests, and we also have to do the same. It's most likely that the India-Bangladesh relationship will be normalized under the new, elected, government."

Since 2024, India has suspended key transshipment access that allowed Bangladeshi exports to go via Indian ports and airports. It also put on hold most normal visa services for Bangladeshis, who were among its largest groups of medical tourists.

Bangladesh Army personnel assemble at Dhaka Residential Model college where election materials are distributed on the eve of election in Dhaka on Wednesday *-PTI*

From Hasina's heavy pro-India orientation, the interim government has tried to rebalance Bangladesh's foreign policy toward the two other key regional players — China and Pakistan — who at the same time are India's main rivals.

If New Delhi regains its importance, it should not deal a blow to the newly expanded relations with Pakistan, with whom Bangladesh has recently increased exchanges, especially economic, and last month resumed direct flights — after a 14-year gap.

Since the relations have been expanded under the caretaker government, Prof. Delwar Hossain from the International Relations Department at Dhaka University forecast that they would only further improve, no matter who comes to power, and there is no likelihood of a sudden change.

"For Pakistan, any political coalition — whether BNP or Jamaat — will be positive. The BNP has a long history of having good relations with Pakistan during their rule ... Jamaat also has a strong and very positive influence in Pakistan," he said.

"For Pakistan, the new regime or new government is not the issue. The issue is what the (India) policy of the new government would be and to what extent it would actually support Pakistan's view."

Both the BNP and Jamaat have repeatedly said they wanted friendly relations with India, and Hossain expected that they would, at the same time, continue the balanced approach introduced by the caretaker administration.

"India is a reality as a neighbor. At the same time, India is also showing interest in mending relations or adopting a more cooperative approach after the vote, with the government that will be elected ... I think there will be pragmatism from both sides," he said.

"I don't see there is a long-term threat to Bangladesh-India relations ... When China and Pakistan were trying to create a trilateral cooperative system or some kind of coalition — China, Bangladesh and Pakistan — we have seen that Bangladesh opted out. It seems that Bangladesh is going to continue its policy of maintaining a balance among these great powers."

Bangladesh's relations with China have not changed since the ouster of Hasina, whose government signed several economic agreements with Beijing. Yunus's administration has continued this cooperation, and China was among the very few countries he officially visited during his term.

During the visit, he secured about $2.1 billion in Chinese investments, loans and grants, including funding for infrastructure like Mongla Port and a special economic zone in Chattogram — Bangladesh's largest port. China has also eased visa rules for Bangladeshi businesspeople, medical travelers and tourists.

According to Munshi Faiz Ahmed, Bangladesh's former ambassador to Beijing, China's importance for Bangladesh cannot be substituted by any other country, especially as over the past few years it has emerged not only as its key investor, but also the largest trade partner.

In the fiscal year 2024-25, Bangladesh's trade with China was over $21.3 billion, according to National Board of Revenue data. With India, it was about $11.5 billion.

The trade — especially import — dependence on Beijing started long before the regime change. In terms of trade volume, China overtook India already in 2018.

"Even when people thought that we had very close relations with India, our relations with China continued to grow in terms of trade and commerce ... Our trade with China has surpassed India's, and China is a much bigger investor in Bangladesh's development projects," Ahmed said.

"Bangladesh will continue to cooperate with China for a long time to come because what China can provide, no other country can." *—Courtesy, Arab News*

SALAR ساہ

From 'Yield' to 'Zero Hour': A guide to Parliament's lingo

"Yield" does not mean profit or a farm produce here, "leave of the House" is not actually leaving it, there is no water in its "well", "zero hour" does not refer to the midnight or start of an operation, and "authenticating" is not as simple as self-attesting a document. Jargons are flowing thick and fast during the ongoing fiery Budget Session of Parliament, where everyone speaking is not a "Speaker" and speeches given in response to the Union Budget, or the President's Address before that, is not a "reply".

Some MPs have agreed to "yield", some did not. Some have asked for the "authentication" of documents being quoted, to which some agreed and some did not. Quite often, opposition MPs thronged the "well", but there has been no occasion for a "division" so far.

Here is a primer on what these and a few more parliamentary jargons mean:

AUTHENTICATION

An MP is required to authenticate any document being quoted by giving it in writing to the Speaker or Table of the House. He or she needs to mention that they stand by what is being quoted and they verify the content of the document being quoted. Thereafter, the Speaker can allow or disallow it, though the government can later propose an action if the "authenticated" document is not found to be correct.

TABLE OF THE HOUSE

In the pit of the two Houses of Parliament, just in front of the table of the Secretary-General, lies the Table of the House. This is where the papers required to be laid on the Table of the House are formally placed.

Well

It is the space between the seating areas for MPs and the high chair of the Speaker in case of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman in the Rajya Sabha.

Speaker

Speaker is the principal presiding officer of the Lok Sabha. He is chosen by the House from among its members by a simple majority of members present and voting. Within the walls of the House, his authority is supreme.

Leave of the House

It is the formal approval given by the House to a member to move a motion or withdraw the same. A member can seek the leave of the House only after he or she has been permitted to do so by the Speaker. The member is required to rise in his or her place and ask for the leave.

Yield

"Yielding" or "yielding the floor" refers to a member agreeing to stop speaking to allow another member to speak. It is meant to allow interruptions in an orderly manner. However, the speaker has an option not to give way or yield and go on with his or her speech, if the interruption is not for raising a point of order or with the permission of the Chair.

Point of Order

Any member can bring to the Chair's notice any instance of what he or she considers a breach of order or a transgression of any written or unwritten rule or convention of the House. In such cases, a member is allowed to interrupt proceedings of the House by rising and saying, "On a point of order, Mr Chairman/Speaker" and then state the point in question.

It is up to the presiding officer to accept or reject the said point of order.

The member raising a point of order has to specify the rule under which he or she seeks direction of the Chair.

Reply

Whenever a debate takes place, whether in response to the President's Address, Union Budget or a Bill, proportionate time is allocated to members from various parties. However, the speeches made by all the MPs are not called "replies". It is only the last speech that is called a "reply", which is given by the concerned minister in case of the Budget or Bills, and by the Prime Minister in case of the President's Address or a no-confidence motion.

Zero Hour

It is an parliamentary innovation and started in its first decade when it was felt that there should be some allocated time for MPs to raise issues of public importance, related to their constituencies or to the nation, without any advance notice. Generally, it starts at 12 noon and continues till 1 pm before the House adjourns for lunch, but there have been occasions when the Zero Hour has been held at other hours.

Division

Division is ordered by the Chair when his opinion on the question just decided by voice vote is challenged by members who demand a division. It involves casting and counting of votes by the members present in the House. Once the division is ordered, lobbies need to be cleared by non-members and then electric bells are rung in the entire Parliament complex to alert those MPs present there, so that they can rush to the House to record their votes. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Sanctions squeeze Russia's war finances as oil revenues slump

Oil and gas exports have sustained Russia's finances throughout its war against Ukraine. But as the fourth anniversary of the full-scale invasion approaches, those cash flows have fallen sharply to levels not seen in years.

The slump reflects a tightening web of Western sanctions, tariff pressure from US President Donald Trump on India, and a widening crackdown on the "shadow fleet" of tankers used to move Russian oil outside official channels. The decline is forcing President Vladimir Putin's government to borrow more from domestic banks and raise taxes to steady the budget — measures that risk compounding strains in an economy already facing slowing growth and stubborn inflation.

In January, Russian state revenues from oil and gas taxes fell to 393 billion roubles (£4.2bn), down from 587 billion roubles in December and from 1.12 trillion roubles in January 2025. According to Janis Kluge, an expert on the Russian economy at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, the figure is the lowest since the Covid-19 pandemic.

A tougher sanctions regime

In a bid to pressure the Kremlin to halt fighting in Ukraine, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on Russia's two largest oil companies, Rosneft and Lukoil, on 21 November. The measures mean that any company buying or transporting their oil risks being cut off from the US banking system — a serious threat for multinational traders and shippers.

The European Union has gone further. On 21 January it began banning fuels refined from Russian crude, preventing oil from being processed in third countries and then shipped to Europe as petrol or diesel. On Friday, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed a full ban on shipping services for Russian oil, arguing that sanctions provide leverage to bring Moscow to the negotiating table. "We must be clear-eyed: Russia will only come to the table with genuine intent if it is pressured to do so," she said.

These steps mark an escalation from the $60-per-barrel oil price cap introduced by the Group of Seven under the Biden administration. The cap, enforced through G7-based insurers and shippers, aimed to curb Russian profits without banning imports outright, amid concerns over global energy prices.

Initially, the cap dented

In January, Russian state revenues from oil and gas taxes fell to 393 billion roubles (£4.2bn), down from 587 billion roubles in December and from 1.12 trillion roubles in January 2025 *-PTI*

Moscow's revenues, particularly after the EU banned most Russian seaborne oil, forcing the Kremlin to redirect exports to China and India. But Russia adapted, assembling a "shadow fleet" of ageing tankers operating beyond the reach of Western insurers and regulators. Revenues subsequently rebounded.

Pressure on India

Washington has also sought to curb demand. On 3 February, Mr Trump agreed to lower tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from 25 per cent, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi had agreed to halt Russian crude imports. On Friday, he removed an additional 25 per cent tariff that had been imposed over continued purchases of Russian oil.

Mr Modi has not commented publicly. India's foreign affairs spokesman, Randhir Jaiswal, said the country was "diversifying our energy sourcing in keeping with objective market conditions". Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow was monitoring developments and remained committed to its "advanced strategic partnership" with New Delhi.

Shipments to India have nonetheless declined in recent weeks, falling from 2 million barrels per day in October to 1.3 million in December, according to the Kyiv School of Economics and the US Energy Information Administration. Data firm Kpler says India is unlikely to disengage fully from discounted Russian supplies in the near term.

Western allies have increasingly targeted individual vessels in the shadow fleet, sanctioning 640 tankers across the US, UK and EU. US forces have seized ships linked to sanctioned Venezuelan oil, including one sailing under a Russian flag, while France briefly intercepted a suspected shadow fleet vessel. Ukrainian strikes have also hit Russian refineries, pipelines, export terminals and tankers.

DEEPENING DISCOUNTS

As legal and financial risks mount, buyers are demanding steeper discounts. In December the price gap widened to around $25 per barrel, with Russia's Urals crude dropping below $38 per barrel compared with roughly $62.50 for Brent.

Because Russia's oil production taxes are linked to global prices, the discount directly erodes state income.

"It's a cascading or domino effect," said Mark Esposito, a senior analyst at S&P Global Energy. Including refined products such as diesel and petrol in sanctions packages has created "a one-two punch" affecting both crude flows and exports of refined fuels. "A universal way of saying, if it's coming from Russian crude, it's out."

Reluctance among buyers has left an estimated 125 million barrels of oil sitting in tankers at sea, driving up freight costs. Daily rates for very large crude carriers have climbed to $125,000, a surge Mr Esposito links directly to the sanctions fallout.

GROWTH FALTERS

At the same time, Russia's broader economy is losing momentum. The boost from war-related spending is fading, labour shortages are constraining expansion, and lower growth is dampening tax receipts.

Gross domestic product rose just 0.1 per cent in the third quarter. Forecasts for this year range between 0.6 and 0.9 per cent, down sharply from growth of more than 4 per cent in 2023 and 2024. *—PTI*

'Russia will stick to nuclear arms limits if US does'

MOSCOW, 11 FEB

Russia will continue to observe the limits of New START (New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), which expired on 5 February, provided the US does the same, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in Parliament on Wednesday. Lavrov said that although Washington has not responded to President Vladimir Putin's offer to extend compliance, Moscow will respect the treaty's caps as long as it sees the US observing them. The expiry leaves the world's two largest nuclear arsenals without formal limits, raising fears of a arms race. Putin offered to adhere to the caps for another year if Washington reciprocated, while US President Donald Trump has sought a broader pact including China, which Beijing has rejected. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

20 die as Cyclone Gezani sweeps Madagascar

ANTANANARIVO, 11 FEB

At least 20 people have died in Madagascar after Tropical Cyclone Gezani hit the island with winds exceeding 195 kph, officials said. The National Office for Risk and Disaster Management reported the deaths were caused by collapsing buildings, with 19 others injured. The cyclone made landfall in the eastern port city of Toamasina, leaving widespread destruction. "Roofs have been blown away, walls have collapsed, power poles are down, trees uprooted," said a resident. Red alerts have been issued for several regions amid risks of flooding and landslides.President Michael Randrianirina visited Toamasina to survey damage. Gezani follows Cyclone Fytia, which killed 14 people, under two weeks ago. —*PTI*

UN warns of escalating crisis in South Sudan

UNITED NATIONS, 11 FEB

The UN has warned that South Sudan faces escalating violence, pushing the world's youngest nation to the brink. Peacekeeping chief Jean-Pierre Lacroix urged the government and opposition to resume dialogue, warning both sides are preparing for large-scale hostilities. Since independence in 2011, ethnic tensions between President Salva Kiir (Dinka) and former vice president Riek Machar (Nuer) sparked a civil war that killed over 400,000. A 2018 peace deal formed a unity government, but implementation has stalled. Recent fighting in Jonglei has displaced over 280,000 people, while cholera outbreaks, attacks on health facilities, and reduced UN patrols threaten humanitarian access and civilian safety. —*PTI*

Pro-democracy activist's dad jailed in Hong Kong

HONG KONG, 11 FEB

Kwok Yin-sang, 69, has been convicted in Hong Kong for attempting to access his daughter Anna Kwok's financial assets, the first case under national security law. Anna, executive director of the Washington-based Hong Kong Democracy Council, is wanted for alleged foreign sanctions lobbying and other "hostile" activities. Kwok bought an insurance policy for Anna as a child and tried to withdraw funds in 2025. Magistrate Cheng Lim-chi ruled he must have known she was an absconder. Sentencing is scheduled for 26 February. Anna called the conviction "transnational repression," while Amnesty International warned it sets a dangerous precedent. —*PTI*

B'desh tightens security ahead of polls

Economy and minority issues are central as people will also vote on a referendum

DHAKA, 11 FEB

Bangladesh tightened security ahead of its 13th National Parliamentary Election on Thursday. It is he first after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was toppled by student-led protests in 2024.

Election Commission (EC) said the elections would have the largest-ever deployment of law enforcement and the extensive use of technology in the country's electoral history. Nearly 958,000 law enforcement personnel will be deployed across the country.

But, of the 43,000 polling centres, the EC identified at least 24,000 – over half – of them as "risk prone". Officials said the EC's security system is based on risk assessment.

The Election Commissioner said, "For the first time, UAVs, drones, and body-worn cameras are being used for law enforcement. Around 25,000 body-worn cameras will be deployed on the field. CCTV cameras have been installed in over 90 per cent of centres."

With Hasina's Awami League banned, the election will primarily pit the Centre-Right party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) headed by late former prime minister Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman against the far-Right Jamaat-e-Islami headed by Ameer Shafiqur Rahman.

Jamaat, which was banned under Hasina's rule, is a hard-Islamist party. Many fear minorities could face greater threats if they come to power. Bangladesh is over 90 per cent Muslim and about 8 per cent Hindu.

Both BNP and Jamaat said that they will continue to urge India to extradite Hasina – who has been living in New Delhi. She is sentence to death.

The party that wins will have the uphill task of combating Bangladesh's unemployment and stagnant wages. Much of the nation's economy is based on the garment sector, with four million workers, mostly women, working in the industry.

The election will also include a referendum for political reforms that include prime ministerial term limits, stronger checks on executive power and other safeguards preventing power consolidation.

Whether the process delivers genuine institutional reform or continues to support existing power structures will shape Bangladesh's domestic stability, which has been marked by periods of military rule since its independence from Pakistan in 1971.

"Uncertainties remain over what kind of election it will be. Will everyone be able to vote freely? Will their votes be properly counted?" said political analyst Debapriya Bhattacharya, who headed a committee of the outgoing interim administration on the corruption of the ousted Awami League regime. —*PTI*

Official checks ballots before its distribution to polling centers ahead of national elections —*PTI*

VOTER DEMOGRAPHICS

- **12.77 crore** citizens will vote in 42,659 centres.
- **45,71,681** first time voters.
- **28%** of the population is between 15-29 years (Gen Z).

Allies lock horns for crucial election

DHAKA, 11 FEB

The election is set to become a two-way fight between the alliances led by the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The two parties were once in alliance when the late Khaleda Zia led the country, but have now turned in separate directions.

The BNP, now led by her son Tarique Rahman, is widely seen as the frontrunner in opinion polls. He has pledged a "Bangladesh first" foreign policy and promised to rebuild democratic institutions, restore the rule of law and revive the economy. Tarique returned in December after 17 years in exile.

Jamaat heads an 11-party alliance that includes the National Citizen Party (NCP), formed by student groups that led protests against Sheikh Hasina. Banned under Hasina and long controversial for its pro-Pakistan stance in 1971 and Islamist ideology, Jamaat could draw young voters through their alliance with NCP. —*AGENCIES*

A video clip of students exiting Tumbler Ridge Secondary School following the shooting in British Columbia, Canada, on Tuesday —*PTI*

Shootings at school, house in Canada leaves 10 dead

VANCOUVER, 11 FEB

- Superintendent Ken Floyd said a female suspect had been identified but not named. The motive remains unclear. The suspect died from 'self-inflicted' injuries

Eight people are dead following a school shooting in British Columbia, including a woman believed to be the shooter. Canadian authorities reported on Tuesday that two additional victims were found dead at a nearby home.

More than 25 people were injured in the shooting at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School, with two airlifted in life-threatening condition. The suspect appeared to have died from a self-inflicted injury, police said.

Superintendent Ken Floyd said a female suspect had been identified but police have not named her. The motive remains unclear, and investigators are examining her link to the victims.

Pastor George Rowe of Tumbler Ridge Fellowship Baptist Church visited the recreation centre where victims' families were awaiting updates.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said he was devastated by the shooting and expressed solidarity with the victims and gratitude to first responders. His office said he has suspended a planned trip to Halifax and Munich.

The provincial government website lists Tumbler Ridge Secondary School as having 175 students from Grades 7 to 12. School shootings are rare in Canada.

Canada's government has responded to previous mass shootings with gun control measures, including a recently broadened ban on all guns it considers assault weapons.

Tuesday's shootings were Canada's deadliest rampage since 2020, when a gunman in Nova Scotia killed 13 people and set fires that left another nine dead. —*PTI*

Iran Prez apologises for crackdown on 1979 revolution anniversary

DUBAI, 11 FEB

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian apologised to "all those affected" by the bloody crackdown over the nationwide protests as the country marked the 47th anniversary of its 1979 Islamic Revolution on Wednesday.

Pezeshkian said he knew the "great sorrow" felt by people in the protests and crackdown.

"We are ashamed before the people, and we are obligated to assist all those who were harmed in these incidents," Pezeshkian said. "We are not seeking confrontation with the people."

"We consider protest to be a blessing," he said. "However, we are disgusted by destruction, vandalism, killing, and arson. No true Iranian takes up arms to kill another Iranian."

Pezeshkian insisted that Iran was "not seeking nuclear weapons... and is ready for any kind of verification," a response to threats from US President Donald Trump.

In the streets, people waved images of Supreme Leader Ali Ayatollah Khamenei and the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic, alongside Iranian and Palestinian flags. Some chanted "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!"

The 1979 Revolution was against foreign interference in Iran, and saw demonstrators topple the monarchy.

Iran President Masoud

TRUMP MULLS ANOTHER CARRIER

Trump told Axios that he is considering sending "another" carrier to the region. Already, the US has positioned the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln near Iran along with destroyer ships and warplanes.

Meanwhile, United States military airbases in Qatar have been reportedly loading 'Patriot missiles' into their launchers. —*AGENCIES*

US discarded us like toilet paper: Pak's Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD, 11 FEB

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said the US treated his country worse than a "piece of toilet paper" at a National Assembly address on Tuesday.

He called Islamabad's alliance with Washington a "historic error", saying its 1999 ties with the US left Pakistan vulnerable to terrorism.

"Hillary Clinton at the UN said they left Pakistan like a piece of toilet paper. Yet we celebrated when Bill Clinton visited for two hours in 2000," he said, adding that Pakistan was "used and thrown."

After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, Pakistan was left grappling with Taliban insurgents after the US withdrew from Afghanistan. "We deny our history. Terrorism comes from the mistakes of dictators in the past," he said, referencing past dictators such as Zia-ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf. —*AGENCIES*

Russian strikes kill dad & his 3 kids in Ukraine

KYIV, 11 FEB

A Russian drone smashed into a home in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region overnight, killing a father and his three small children and seriously wounding their mother who is 35 weeks pregnant, officials said Wednesday.

The strike completely destroyed the house and set it on fire, with the family trapped under the rubble, Kharkiv regional prosecutor's office said.

The 34-year-old father and his three children — twin boys aged 2 and their 1-year-old sister — were killed, while rescue workers pulled the mother alive from the rubble, prosecutors said. She sustained blast injuries, a traumatic brain injury, burns and hearing loss, they said.

Russia had launched 129 long-range drones at Ukraine.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian drone attack caused a fire at an industrial plant in Russia's Volgograd, authorities said.

'ZELENSKYY TO HOLD ELECTIONS SOON'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is set to announce plans to hold elections and a referendum on 24 February, the four-year anniversary of the invasion, the Financial Times reported.

Zelenskyy declared martial law following Moscow's invasion and has since suspended elections, citing the risk of Russian interference. This decision has drawn criticism from both US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

However, Zelenskyy, with the support of the Ukrainian opposition parties, has said that it would be unfair to hold elections when parts of his country were occupied by Russia.

Zelenskyy has said that he would hold elections once there was peace in the country. Earlier, he had announced that the US-led peace efforts have a deadline for June this year. —*AGENCIES*

3,000ºC US-MADE BOMBS

Israel used thermal weapons to 'evaporate' bodies in Gaza: Report

TEL AVIV, 11 FEB

Israel allegedly used thermal weapons to make thousands of Palestinians evaporate, leaving behind no body and only traces of blood or fragments of flesh, according to an Al Jazeera report.

During its genocide on the Gaza Strip, Israel is believed to have used internationally banned thermal and thermobaric weapons, often referred to as vacuum or aerosol bombs, Al Jazeera reported. The bombs, believed to be US-made, have killed at least 2,842 Palestinians, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

The bombs are capable of generating temperatures upward of 3,500 degrees Celsius. An expert told Al Jazeera that when the human body comes into contact with such high temperatures, it is "chemically inevitable" that the body turns to ash. "When a body is exposed to energy exceeding 3,000 degrees celsius combined with massive pressure and oxidation, the fluids will boil instantly," said Dr Munir al-Bursh, Director General of the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Gaza.

Israel is believed to have used US-made internationally banned weapons in Gaza, used to kill evaportate Palestinian bodies —*WIKIPEDIA*

The intense heat is often generated by tritonal, a mixture of TNT and aluminium powder used in US-made bombs like the MK-84. Al Jazeera said that fragments of several other US-made bombs were believed to be used in Gaza, including the BLU-109 bunker buster and GBU-39.

Thermobaric weapons do not just kill; they obliterate matter. Unlike conventional explosives, these weapons disperse a cloud of fuel that ignites to create an enormous fireball and a vacuum effect. The intense heat is often generated by tritonal, a mix of TNT and aluminium powder.

Israel killed nearly 80,000 people since the 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas. Nearly 600 Gazans have been killed since the ceasefire started last January. —*AGENCIES*

Epstein files: Victoria Secret's ex-CEO, UAE tycoon named

WASHINGTON, 11 FEB

During a floor speech on Tuesday, US Congressman Ro Khanna revealed the identities of six men redacted from investigative files on convicted sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. Khana identified retail billionaire Leslie Wexner, former Victoria's Secret CEO.

After visiting the DOJ, Khanna said in a floor speech, "If we found six men they were hiding in two hours, imagine how many men they are covering up in those 3 million files."

Other than Wexner, Khanna named Emirati billionaire Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Nicola Caputo, Salvatore Nuara, Zurab Mikeladze and Leonic Leonov.

Wexner, whose retail empire includes Victoria's Secret and Bath & Body Works, was reportedly labelled a co-conspirator of Epstein by the FBI, though he faces no charges.

Sulayem, a Dubai-based businessman and brother of FIA chief Mohammed Ben Sulayem, received an email from Epstein stating, "I loved the torture video."

Les Wexner embracing Jeffery Epstein at a social gathering

PHOTO: US HOUSE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Caputo is an Italian politician who served as a Member of the European Parliament from 2014 to 2019.

In a letter from 9 February, the Department of Justice (DOJ) said lawmakers could review unredacted versions of the files.

Epstein admitted guilt in 2008 to soliciting a minor for prostitution. He died in an apparent suicide in 2019 while facing trial on sex-trafficking charges. —*AGENCIES*

Co-founder of Akasa Air Praveen Iyer resigns

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Akasa Air's co-founder and chief commercial officer Praveen Iyer has resigned, marking the second high-level exit in four months at the over three-year-old airline.

After a five-year journey, Iyer has decided to move on to begin the next chapter of his life, the airline said in a statement.

Iyer is the second co-founder after Neelu Khatri left the airline in October, 2025. Akash Air began flying from 7 August, 2022. Iyer is also part of the airline's executive committee.

Now, Akasa Air has four co-founders — Aditya Ghosh, Anand Srinivasan, Belson Coutinho and Bhavin Joshi. Vinay Dube is the founder and CEO of the airline. Srinivasan, who is the airline's chief information officer, will take over as the chief commercial officer. —*PTI*

Govt's BHEL share sale over-subscribed

Investors place bids worth over ₹5,650 crore

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The government's stake sale in BHEL was subscribed more than two times on Wednesday, with institutional investors placing bids worth over Rs 5,650 crore on the first day of the sale.

The government has decided to exercise the green shoe option in the Offer for Sale (OFS), and has put the entire 5 per cent stake on the block, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Arunish Chawla said on X.

"Offer for Sale in Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) received enthusiastic response and was over-subscribed 2.3 times on the first day," Chawla said. Retail investors will get to bid in the OFS on Thursday.

The government will mobilise Rs 4,422 crore at a floor price of Rs 254 per share by selling 5 per cent of its stake in BHEL. On Wednesday, institutional investors put in bids for over 22.07 crore shares at an indicative price of Rs 256.07 a share. The government is disinvesting 3 per cent equity in BHEL with an additional 2 per cent as a green-shoe option at a floor price of Rs 254 in the two-day offer for sale. Retail investors will be able to place a price bid on Thursday.

The base issue size comprises over 10.44 crore shares, or 3 per cent stake, in BHEL, plus a greenshoe option to sell over 6.96 crore shares or 2 per cent.

The sale of total 17.41 crore shares, or 5 per cent stake, would fetch government Rs 4,422 crore. The government holds 63.17 per cent in BHEL.

Shares of BHEL touched a low of Rs 258.60 in Wednesday's trade. The scrip settled at Rs 260.65, down 5.58 per cent over the previous close.

So far this fiscal year, the government has raised Rs 8,768 crore through PSU disinvestments. —*PTI*

AFTER DEC FIASCO

IndiGo says it has optimum pilot pool as duty relaxations end

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

IndiGo, which faced regulatory action following massive operational disruptions in December, has told aviation watchdog DGCA that all necessary operational, rostering, and monitoring arrangements are being put in place to ensure full compliance with the revised pilot duty norms.

With the temporary exemption for the airline on the new Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms ending on Tuesday, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Wednesday issued a statement detailing the progress and assurance provided by the airline.

Over-optimisation of operations, inadequate regulatory preparedness, along with deficiencies in system software support and shortcomings in management structure and operational control at IndiGo were among the key reasons that led to the disruptions, following which the watchdog had also curtailed the carrier's winter schedule flights by 10 per cent.

Against the backdrop of IndiGo cancelling 2,507 flights between 3 and 5 December, the DGCA approved the airline's request for certain relaxations in implementing the revised FDTL norms till 10 February.

According to the DGCA statement on Wednesday, IndiGo has informed that it shall be fully prepared to comply with the statutory provisions and to implement the approved FDTL scheme dated 9 October, 2025 upon expiry of the exemptions.

The airline, which saw its domestic market share slump to 59.6 per cent in December from 63.6 per cent in November, operates around 2,200 flights daily. —*PTI*

—FREEPIK

Silver climbs to ₹2.68L/kg; Gold rises to ₹1.61L/10g

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Silver prices climbed Rs 4,000 to Rs 2.68 lakh per kilogram in the national capital on Wednesday, while gold edged up to Rs 1.61 lakh per 10g tracking strong global trends.bAccording to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal jumped by Rs 4,000, or 1.5 per cent, to Rs 2,68,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from Tuesday's closing level of Rs 2,64,500 per kg. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also witnessed buying by traders, with prices rising Rs 600, or 0.4 per cent, to Rs 1,61,300 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 1,60,700 per 10g in the previous session. In the global markets, spot silver gained USD 4.71, or nearly 6 per cent, to USD 85.51 per ounce, while gold traded at 1.06 per cent higher at USD 5,078.72 per ounce. —*PTI*

Jet Airways to sell aircraft frames, engines for $46M

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

- Jet Airways flew for 25 years before stopping operations in April 2019 due to debt woes and is currently undergoing a liquidation process.

Grounded Jet Airways has executed an agreement for the sale of three aircraft frames and six engines to a Malta-based entity for USD 46 million.

Jet Airways flew for 25 years before stopping operations in April 2019 due to debt woes and is currently undergoing a liquidation process.

In a filing to the BSE on Wednesday, the airline said it has executed the sale and purchase agreement and related documents for three aircraft frames and six engines.

The total value of the deal with Malta-based Ace Aviation is USD 46 million, which translates to over Rs 417 crore at current exchange rates.

Aircraft frame MSN 35159 - VT-JES, and engines ESN – 906336 and ESN - 906364, will be sold for USD 16 million, while aircraft frame MSN 35158 - VT-JEV, as well as engines ESN – 906353 and ESN -906298 will be sold for USD 12.5 million, according to the filing. Further, aircraft frame MSN 35162 - VT-JEM and engines ESN - 906351 and ESN - 906337 will be purchased by the Malta-based entity for USD 17.5 million.

All three frames are of wide-body Boeing 777 planes. —*PTI*

Sensex, Nifty close almost unchanged in choppy trade

MUMBAI, 11 FEB

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed on a flat note in a choppy session on Wednesday as gains in PSU banks and auto shares were offset by losses in IT stocks.

In a range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex slipped 40.28 points, or 0.05 per cent, to close at 84,233.64. During the day, it hit a high of 84,487.34 and a low of 84,081.25.

The NSE Nifty inched up 18.70 points, or 0.07 per cent, to settle at 25,953.85.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies, Eternal, ITC, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, UltraTech Cement, Titan, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finserv and Tata Steel were among the laggards.

On the other hand, State Bank of India, Maruti Suzuki India, IndiGo, Trent, Reliance Industries, NTPC, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Hindustan Unilever, and Bharat Electronics Ltd were among the gainers.

A total of 2,316 stocks declined, while 1,913 advanced and 154 remained unchanged on the BSE.

BSE MidCap Select Index rose 0.18 per cent, while SmallCap Select Index ended on a flat note.

Among sectoral indices, Focussed IT declined the most by 1.74 per cent, Information Technology by 1.73 per cent, Services by 0.16 per cent, Private Banks Index by 0.13 per cent, FMCG and Industrials by 0.04 per cent each. On the other hand, Healthcare, Auto, PSU Bank, Oil & Gas, Realty, Utilities, Consumer Discretionary, Telecommunication, Metal and Consumer Durables were among the gainers. —*PTI*

CRUDE OIL HITS RS 5,844 AMID US-IRAN STRAINS

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Crude oil prices rose by Rs 44 to Rs 5,844 per barrel in futures trade on Wednesday, mirroring gains in global markets amid escalating US-Iran tensions that heightened fears of supply disruptions. On the MCX, the February contract climbed 0.76 per cent, while the March contract gained 0.52 per cent. Globally, WTI crude traded 0.56 per cent higher at USD 64.32 per barrel and Brent rose 0.48 per cent to USD 69.13. —*PTI*

Be AI-ready or quit: Google to employees

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Google's business unit has in a clear-cut announcement has asked employees to be ready to embrace overwhelming impact of AI as part of the organisation's future plans or quit voluntarily.

This comes in the wake of Alphabet, Google's parent company, reportedly registering a record-breaking revenue of $400 billion in 2025. For those who are unlikely ready to adopt the big AI impact the Google has given them the option of taking a voluntary exit with a severance package.

Google's Chief Business Officer, Philipp Schindler, is learnt to have stated in an internal memo that certain employees in the company's global business organization (GBO) unit could opt for voluntary exit. GBO unit oversees various operations including advertising products and services, as well as global revenue growth.

According to reports, Philipp Schindler admitted to having started off 2026 in a "strong position." Adding that, the company only wanted to have employees who were "all in" on its future plans, and could embrace "AI to have even greater impact." —*Agencies*

Rupee falls 14P, closes at 90.70 against USD

MUMBAI, 11 FEB

The rupee depreciated 14 paise to close at 90.70 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, on dollar demand from importers and geopolitical tensions. Forex traders said the rupee is trading with a slight negative bias amid geopolitical tensions and elevated crude oil prices. Dollar demand from importers may also pressurise the rupee. However, FPI inflows may support the local unit at lower levels. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.56 against the US dollar, and touched a low of 90.75 and a high of 90.46 against the greenback in intraday trade. Meanwhile, the dollar index was trading 0.26 per cent lower at 96.54. —*PTI*

Titan, Eicher Motors stocks hit 52-week high

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Shares of Titan climbed nearly 3 per cent to hit its 52-week high on the bourses on Wednesday after the leading jewellery and watchmaker reported a 60.84 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 1,684 crore for December quarter.

The stock climbed 2.64 per cent to Rs 4,379.95 on the BSE. On the NSE, the scrip of the company rose 2.56 per cent to Rs 4,378.40 apiece, also marking its yearly peak.

Shares of Eicher Motors Ltd surged 7 per cent to hit its 52-week high on Wednesday after the company reported a 21.37 per cent rise in consolidated profit after tax to Rs 1,420.61 crore in the third quarter ended December.

Shares of Britannia Industries Ltd, too, jumped 5 per cent on the bourses on Wednesday. —*PTI*

TotalEnergies sells 1.7% stake in Adani Green

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

- In its fourth quarter and full year 2025 earnings statement, the firm said it raised $2.08 billion in Oct-Dec 2025 from divestments.

French energy giant TotalEnergies on Wednesday said it has sold 1.7 per cent stake in Adani Green Energy Ltd during the fourth quarter of 2025.

In its fourth quarter and full year 2025 earnings statement, TotalEnergies said it raised USD 2.08 billion in October-December 2025 from divestments. It had in January 2021 acquired a minority interest in Adani Green Energy Ltd.

As part of its strategy to enhance its development in renewables in India through direct access to a portfolio of assets, TotalEnergies had also acquired 50 per cent stake in three joint venture operating renewable assets.

TotalEnergies Renewables Indian Ocean, the subsidiary of TotalEnergies, sold 1.7 per cent equity stake in Adani Green Energy to 17 investors via block deals on December 10, according to block deal data of stock exchanges.

It sold 2.86 crore equity shares of the Adani group company for Rs 2,778.09 crore. Its holding in Adani Green Energy declined to 17.25 per cent. —*PTI*

Balers oppose proposed ban on jute stockholding

KOLKATA, 11 FEB

An association of jute balers has urged the Union Textile Ministry to reject the Indian Jute Mills Association's (IJMA) proposal to ban stockholding of raw jute, warning it would disrupt the supply chain and harm farmers.

In a letter to the ministry, the Jute Balers' Association opposed IJMA's call to restrict raw fibre stocks held by balers and traders. The IJMA has sought a ban on private raw jute trading to curb soaring prices, which it says have forced mills to scale down production, shut units and cut jobs. The issue was raised during Union Textile Minister Giriraj Singh's meeting in the city on Sunday.

The balers' body stressed that balers procure, grade and store raw jute, ensuring steady supplies to mills throughout the year. —*PTI*

OpenAI to prioritise safety over privacy for minors

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Asserting that access to safe artificial intelligence is a fundamental right for the first generation, OpenAI on Wednesday unveiled a dedicated safety blueprint for Indian teenagers.

The AI behemoth said for minors, it will prioritise safety over privacy and freedom, ensuring ChatGPT's interactions with a teenager are different from its responses to an adult.

OpenAI's blueprint comes just a few days ahead of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, to be held in Delhi from 16-20 February.

Citing RATI Foundation's Ideal Internet Report 2024-25, OpenAI noted that 62 per cent of Indian teens use shared devices, making traditional safety tools — which often assume private, single-user devices ineffective.

The company will offer built-in, age-appropriate safeguards that complement the collective role played by Indian families, schools, and communities in shaping a teen's digital experience.

OpenAI's parental controls will allow parents to link their accounts with their teen's ChatGPT profile through an email invitation. Once linked, parents can manage privacy and data settings and set 'blackout hours' to ensure breaks from the screen. —*PTI*

UBS' new GCC in Hyderabad to add 3,000 jobs in 2 yrs

HYDERABAD, 11 FEB

Swiss multinational investment bank and financial services company UBS on Wednesday announced the opening of its new GCC here, marking a significant step in strengthening its presence in the city and reaffirming its long-term commitment to India. With the new facility, UBS plans to add nearly 3,000 professionals over the next two years, the Swiss firm said in a release. The state-of-the-art centre further reinforces Hyderabad's growing position as a global hub for high-value financial technology, operations and GCC (global capability centre) leadership, it said. At the inauguration, Telangana Minister for IT and Industries D Sridhar Babu said the city has emerged as a preferred location for the world's most respected financial institutions. —*PTI*

J&K fruit growers fear impact of Indo-US deal

SRINAGAR, 11 FEB

Fruit growers and dealers in Kashmir fear the India-US trade deal will devastate their horticulture-dependent economy, with reduced tariffs on imported apples threatening to undercut local produce.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Tuesday warned that duty-free imports of apples, walnuts and almonds would hurt local farmers.

President of the fruit growers and dealers union Bashir Ahmad Bashir has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He called for a 100 per cent import duty on foreign apples, warning that the tariff reduction would be "the proverbial final nail in the coffin" for the struggling sector.

Nearly 20 lakh people earn their livelihood directly or indirectly from horticulture activity in Jammu and Kashmir.

However, some within the industry see potential benefits. Javaid Ahmad Lone, a walnut farmer and dealer from Shopian in south Kashmir, said US imports could push local growers to improve quality and help stabilise walnut and almond prices. —*PTI*

AMID BATTLE WITH NETFLIX

Paramount revises offer for Warner Bros

LOS ANGELES, 11 FEB

- In an official statement on Tuesday, Paramount said it has introduced an incremental cash consideration of USD 0.25 per share for every quarter that the transaction does not close beyond 31 December, 2026. The ticking fee is equivalent to around $650 million in cash.

Amid the ongoing takeover battle to acquire Warner Bros Discovery (WBD), Paramount has revised and enhanced its offer, adding a 25-cent per share "ticking fee" to strengthen its all-cash bid.

In an official statement on Tuesday, Paramount said it has introduced an incremental cash consideration of USD 0.25 per share for every quarter that the transaction does not close beyond 31 December, 2026.

The ticking fee, equivalent to around USD 650 million in cash value each quarter, will be payable to WBD shareholders.

It stated "Paramount has enhanced its offer with a USD 0.25 per share "ticking fee," payable to WBD shareholders for each quarter its transaction has not closed beyond 31 December, 2026 ... Paramount will fund USD 2.8 billion termination fee payable to Netflix and offers solutions to WBD's debt financing costs and obligations".

Paramount, in the latest statement, also reiterated that its USD 30 per share all-cash offer provides superior value compared to Netflix's proposed transaction.

According to WBD's preliminary proxy statement filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission on 9 February, Netflix's merger consideration ranges from a minimum of USD 21.23 to a maximum of USD 27.75 per share in cash, depending on debt levels at Discovery Global at the time of separation.

The company said it will fully fund the USD 2.8 billion termination fee payable to Netflix upon termination of the Netflix agreement. —*ANI*

SA beat Afghan after two Super Overs

Ellis and Zampa run riot as Australia thrash Ireland by 67 runs

AHMEDABAD, 11 FEB

South Africa defeated Afghanistan after two Super Overs in a thrilling Group D match of the T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.

South Africa vs Afghanistan in Ahmedabad had all the chaos a T20 World Cup match can hold, and then some, as the Group D clash on Wednesday spiralled into a thriller. South Africa eventually won by four runs.

Batting first, South Africa posted 187 for six. Afghanistan stayed on course for much of the chase with Rahmanullah Gurbaz playing the anchor and the aggressor in a superb 84. Player of the match Lungi Ngidi, SA 3/26. The first twist came at the death. Kagiso Rabada had 12 to defend with just the last wicket left, but two no-balls cracked the door open. Suddenly, it was 2 needed off 3, a free hit in hand, and a simple script for Afghanistan: bat once, take the single, level it, then steal one from the last two.

Instead, they chased a second that was never there, and the innings ended in a run-out. Still, the scores were level, and the match went to a Super Over.

Afghanistan made 17 in the first Super Over. South Africa looked beaten when it needed seven off the last ball, but Tristan Stubbs launched a six to force a second Super Over.

South African cricketers celebrate the win over Afghanistan in a super over during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Afghanistan and South Africa Rahmanullah Gurbaz (Right) *-PTI*

South Africa batted first again, this time piling up 23. Afghanistan lost Mohammad Nabi early, but Gurbaz refused to let the game end quietly, hammering three straight sixes to drag his team back. Then came another jolt: Keshav Maharaj bowled a wide, leaving five to win off the last ball. But on the final delivery, Gurbaz picked out a fielder, and South Africa finally escaped.

Brief Scores:
South Africa: 187 for 6 in 20 overs (Quinton de Kock 59, Ryan Rickelton 61; Azmatullah Omarzai 3/41, Rashid Khan 2/28).
Afghanistan: 187 all out in 19.4 overs (Rahmanullah Gurbaz 84; Lungi Ngidi 3/26).

If Ellis (4/12 in 3.5 overs) blew away the top-order, leg-spinner Adam Zampa (4/23 in 4 overs) polished off the middle and lower-order with

Ireland's innings ending at 115 for 9 in 16.5 overs in pursuit of a challenging score of 183. Australia thrash Ireland by 67 runs. Veteran Paul Stirling was retired hurt and didn't come out to bat. With Mitchell Marsh all but out of the T20 World Cup with a groin injury and none among Mitchell Starc (retired), Pat Cummins, and Josh Hazlewood (injuries) in the current squad, Ellis manfully shouldered the responsibility as the lead pacer. While Ross Adair got one that was fast and low and rocketed into the stumps, Ben Calitz found the pace and bounce generated by Ellis too hot to handle, drawing one onto the stumps. His first spell figures were 3/9 in 3 overs, and after that, Zampa ran through the middle order with George Dockrell (41 off 29 balls), ensuring that Ireland's total went past the 100-run mark. Towards the end, Ellis came back for his final over to end the proceedings as Australia started their campaign in the best way possible.

Brief scores:
Australia: 182 for 6 in 20 overs (Marcus Stoinis 45, Matt Renshaw 37, Josh Inglis 37; Mark Adair 2/44).
Ireland: 115 for 9 in 16.5 overs (George Dockrell 41; Nathan Ellis 4/12, Adam Zampa 4/23). *—PTI*

LIST OF SUPER OVERS IN T20 WC

- West Indies vs New Zealand (2012)
- New Zealand vs Sri Lanka (2012)
- USA vs Pakistan (2024)
- Oman vs Namibia (2024)
- South Africa vs Afghanistan (2026)

SKY AND I CAN PERFORM THE ROLE OF ANCHOR: TILAK

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

Known for his attacking batting, the returning Tilak Varma on Wednesday said he can drop anchor if needed, along with India skipper Suryakumar Yadav,v in the ongoing T20 World Cup. Tilak Varma has successfully returned to action for India ahead of the mega event after recovering from injury.

On the much-awaited February 15 match against traditional rivals Pakistan in Colombo, he said, "We are taking one match at a time. We are prepared for the game and conditions in Sri Lanka."

It's a normal match: Farhan

Pakistan batter Sahibzada Farhan has played down the hype surrounding Sunday's T20 World Cup clash against bitter foes India, calling it a "normal match" although the mindset of his team will be "different" from previous games.

Pakistan sits atop Group A with back-to-back wins over the Netherlands and the USA. Even though the victory against the Dutch team was a narrow one, Pakistan looked quite assured in their 32-run triumph over the Americans last night, in which Farhan smashed a 41-ball 73 to be deservedly adjudged the player of the match. *—PTI*

ICC T20 WC MATCHES TOMMORROW

Sri Lanka battle middle-order woes and Hasaranga's absence vs Oman

Sri Lanka will have to iron out their batting inconsistencies, particularly in the middle overs, and rework their bowling combination in the absence of an injured Wanindu Hasaranga when they take on Oman in a Group B match of the T20 World Cup here on Thursday ***11 am***. The former champions were dealt a severe blow after Hasaranga, their most potent spin weapon, was ruled out of the tournament with a hamstring injury sustained during their opener against Ireland.

Nepal look to end their winless run in T20 World Cup against debutants Italy

Fighting hard but not quite there, Nepal will look to go the distance and end a winless run in the T20 World Cup when they face tournament debutants Italy in a Group C match here on Thursday ***3 pm***. Having made their debut in the competition 12 years ago, Nepal recorded a couple of wins in the 2014 edition when they defeated Hong Kong and Afghanistan, but the Himalayan nation has gone winless since. Interestingly, Nepal has come agonisingly close on three occasions to beat Test-playing nations but ended up on the wrong side of the result.

Abhishek Sharma -PTI

Sharma discharged from hospital, remains uncertain for Namibia match

Abhishek Sharma, the Indian opener, was hospitalised with a stomach infection, making him a doubt for Thursday's game against Namibia in Delhi, PTI reported. He was discharged on Wednesday. At the receiving end would be Namibia, who are not expected to cause much trouble to the dominant defending champions in their second group A game of the T20 showpiece here on Thursday ***7 pm*** . When it comes to quality, the defending champions are light years ahead of the African team, which hardly looked up to scratch against fellow Associate nation the Netherlands at this very ground. To be fair to India, the match against Namibia is more of an extended warm-up tie where they would like to bat first and let the line-up get a good hit.

-PTI

Dallas Open 2026: Fritz dazzles in Dallas win

DALLAS, 11 FEB

Taylor Fritz, on Wednesday, faced his compatriot Marcos Giron. The two know each other well, meeting for the eighth time on the main tour.After a tough battle, the higher-ranked player prevailed for the sixth time. The world No. 7 relied on his serve (21 aces) to win in a nail-biter (6-4, 5-7, 7-6 in 2h25), but not only that.With the match underway for 35 minutes, Fritz and Giron undoubtedly played one of the best points of the week in Dallas. After a well-placed drop shot, the 28-year-old finished on the next shot. Giron managed to get the ball back with a forward run, but its trajectory was slightly slowed by the net.—*PTI*

-NBA

Indiana Pacers upsets New York Knicks in overtime

NEW YORK, 11 FEB

Quenton Jackson scored seven points in overtime on Tuesday night for the visiting Indiana Pacers, who outlasted the New York Knicks 137-134 in a back-and-forth clash.The two teams combined for 39 lead changes, the most in the NBA this season. Jackson finished with 19 points and was one of eight players to score in double figures for the Pacers, who snapped a four-game losing streak. Andrew Nembhard (24 points, 10 assists) posted a double-double while Pascal Siakam had a team-high 30 points.Jalen Brunson scored a game-high 40 points while Josh Hart (15 points, 11 rebounds, 11 assists) recorded a triple-double for the Knicks, who have lost two of three following an eight-game winning streak.—*PTI*

Singles top seed Jay Clarke exits early from Chennai Open

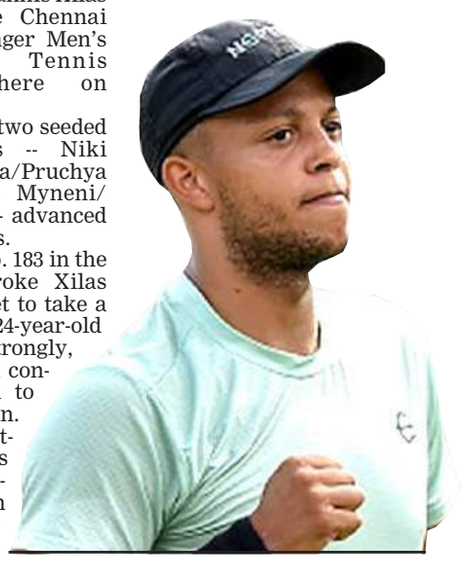
CHENNAI, 11 FEB

Top seed Jay Clarke of Britain suffered a first-round exit in singles, losing to Ioannis Xilas of Greece, at the Chennai Open ATP Challenger Men's International Tennis Championship here on Wednesday.

However, the top two seeded pairs in doubles -- Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha/Pruchya Isaro and Saketh Myneni/ Siddhant Banthia -- advanced to the quarter-finals.

Clarke, ranked No. 183 in the ATP rankings, broke Xilas early in the first set to take a 3-0 lead. But the 24-year-old Xilas struck back strongly, breaking serve and controlling the match to register a 6-4, 6-4 win.

In another first-round singles match, Indian qualifier Aryan Lakshmanan competed strongly in the opening set before going down to Poland's Maks Kasnikowski 5-7, 2-6.



In second-round singles action, India's Mukund Sasikumar won the first set before losing to Kazakhstan's Denis Yevseyev 6-3, 2-6, 3-6. Yevseyev was joined in the quarter-finals by second seed Federico Agustin Gomez of Argentina, who defeated Italy's Lorenzo Carboni 6-3, 6-4. In doubles, top seeds Poonacha/Isaro, who made their Grand Slam debut at last month's Australian Open after winning the Asia-Pacific Wildcard Playoff, defeated the Indian pair Sai Karteek Reddy Ganta/Digvijaypratap Singh 6-4, 6-2 to reach the last eight stage. "We executed our game with high energy and controlled the points. Overall, we played solid," Poonacha said after the win. "Playing in Chennai always feels like home perfect weather, great infrastructure, and very humble people. Hopefully, we will go deeper in the tournament," he added. *—PTI*

NEW TECH AND NEW RULES

Verstappen fastest in first morning of Bahrain test

SAKHIR, 11 FEB

Red Bull's Max Verstappen ended the first morning on Wednesday of the first Bahrain test with the fastest time.

Teams will be given around eight hours of track time as drivers get to grips with the cars they'll be racing during the 2026 campaign, with changes to technology and rules.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen posted the best time of the morning session with 1m 35.433s.

The reliability of the cars will be put to the test over a total of six days on the track over the next two weeks, with the first race of the season taking place in Australia next month. These tests could be crucial, given the sweeping changes to cars this year, making them shorter, narrower, and lighter. It's all to do

with aerodynamics, with narrower tires and changes to the wings and floors of the cars.

There is an "overtake" button, which can be used when cars are within one second of the vehicle in front. F1 says it gives drivers "access to extra electrical energy."

The maximum power button has been renamed the "Boost" button.

Engines are now about a 50-50 split between petrol and electric, which F1 says makes them "more road relevant". *—PTI*

MOC OKAYS NEERAJ'S EXTENDED TRAINING IN SA

NEW DELHI, 11 FEB

The Sports Ministry's Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) has approved an extension of javelin throw star Neeraj Chopra's training in South Africa till April, while green -lighting customised international exposure and coaching for athletes in taekwondo and karate ahead of this year's Asian Games.

In its 168th meeting here on Wednesday, the MOC also sanctioned financial assistance for rising squash star Anahat Singh's strength and conditioning coach. *—PTI*

TOTTENHAM FIRES COACH THOMAS

LONDON, 11 FEB

Thomas Frank was fired by Tottenham on Wednesday after only eight months in charge, and with his team just five points above the relegation zone in the Premier League.

Despite leading Spurs to the round of 16 in the Champions League, Frank has overseen a desperate domestic campaign. A 2-1 loss to Newcastle on Tuesday was greeted by boos from the home fans and left Spurs still without a league win in 2026. *—PTI*

Anvitha takes over lead from Tvesa in WPGT in Pune

PUNE, 11 FEB

A day after a bogey-free card, Tvesa Malik endured a rocky outing in the second round of the Women's Pro Golf Tour to slip to the second spot here on Wednesday.

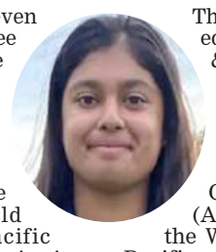
She shot 2-over 74 and slipped from the top spot to second behind Anvitha Narender (72). Anvitha, who shot 71 in the first round, added even par 72 in the second, moved to the top with one more round to go.

Riya Jadon rose to third place with a steady 72 that included three birdies against three bogeys, while Nayanika Sanga (71), who carded three birdies in the first seven holes, cooled off with just one more bogey. Anvitha opened the round with a bogey, but birdies on the ninth and 11th helped her recover before she dropped a shot on the 12th.

A birdie on the 16th and a bogey on the 17th saw her finish at even par. Tvesa had three birdies, also had three bogeys and a double bogey in her card of 74.

Zara Anand will lead a four-member Indian team at the prestigious World Amateur Asia-Pacific (WAAP) here beginning Thursday.

Zara will be accompanied by Guntas Kaur Sandhu (world No. 545), Ananyaa Sood (581), and Jia Kataria (584).



The tournament is hosted by The R&A (Royal & Ancient, Scotland), the world governing body for the rules of golf, in association with the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation (APGC). The winner of the World Amateur Asia-Pacific earns invitations to play in three major championships: the AIG Women's Open, the Amundi Evian Championship, and the Chev ron Championship. *—PTI*

ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP 2026

Anish wins bronze in men's 25m rapid fire pistol

KAZAKHSTAN, 11 FEB

World Championship silver medallist Anish Bhanwala clinched bronze in the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol competition, even as Kazakhstan dominated day eight of the Asian Shooting Championship with four gold medals here on Wednesday.

Adriyan Karmakar in the 50m rifle prone junior men's event and the junior men's 25m RFP team also won gold on the day, taking India's table-topping medal tally to 41 gold, 19 silver, and 15 bronze, with two more days of competitions left.

Anish and Adarsh Singh took the seventh and eighth qualifying spots with scores of 574 and 57,3 respectively, ensuring two Indians in the RFP final. Former champion Nikita Chiryukin of Kazakhstan topped the qualifiers with a 582 and led a trio of his mates into the decider.

Anish Bhanwala - PTI

Japanese Dai Yoshioka, a two-time Olympian and a World Cup gold medallist, and Ha Minh Thanh, a double Asian Games medallist,t also went through along with Ha's teammate Vu Tien Nam.

In the final consisting of eight series of five rapid-fire shots, Yoshioka, Anish, and Chiryukin were fastest off the blocks as Vu and Kazakh Artemiy Kabakov became the first two to be eliminated after the third series.

As long-time teammate Adarsh bowed out after the fourth series with 11 hits to his name, Anish found himself in joint lead with Yoshioka and Nikita after the sixth series with 21 hits.

However, he got two hits in the seventh as the Japanese struck five and Chiryukin four, settling for bronze, the same result he had achieved three years ago at the Changwon Asian Championships.

Yoshioka went on to close with another perfect five to upgrade his Changwon performance by one, finishing on a world and Asian record score of 31. Chiryukin won silver with 28 hits, while Anish ended on 23 hits.—*PTI*

Coach De Zerbi leaves after a 5-0 loss to PSG

MARSEILLE, 11 FEB

Marseille coach Roberto De Zerbi is leaving the French league club in the wake of a 5-0 thrashing at the hands of PSG in the French soccer's biggest game.

The nine-time French champions said on Wednesday that they have ended "their collaboration by mutual agreement."

The heavy loss Sunday at the Parc des Princes restored defending champion PSG's two-point lead over Lens after 21 rounds, with Marseille in fourth place after the humiliating defeat. De Zerbi's exit followed another embarrassing 3-0 loss at Club Brugge two weeks ago that resulted in Marseille exiting the Champions League.

De Zerbi, who had apologized to Marseille fans after the loss against bitter rival PSG, joined Marseille in 2024 after two seasons in charge at Brighton. After tightening things up tactically in Marseille during his first season, his rec ent choices had left many observers puzzled. *—PTI*